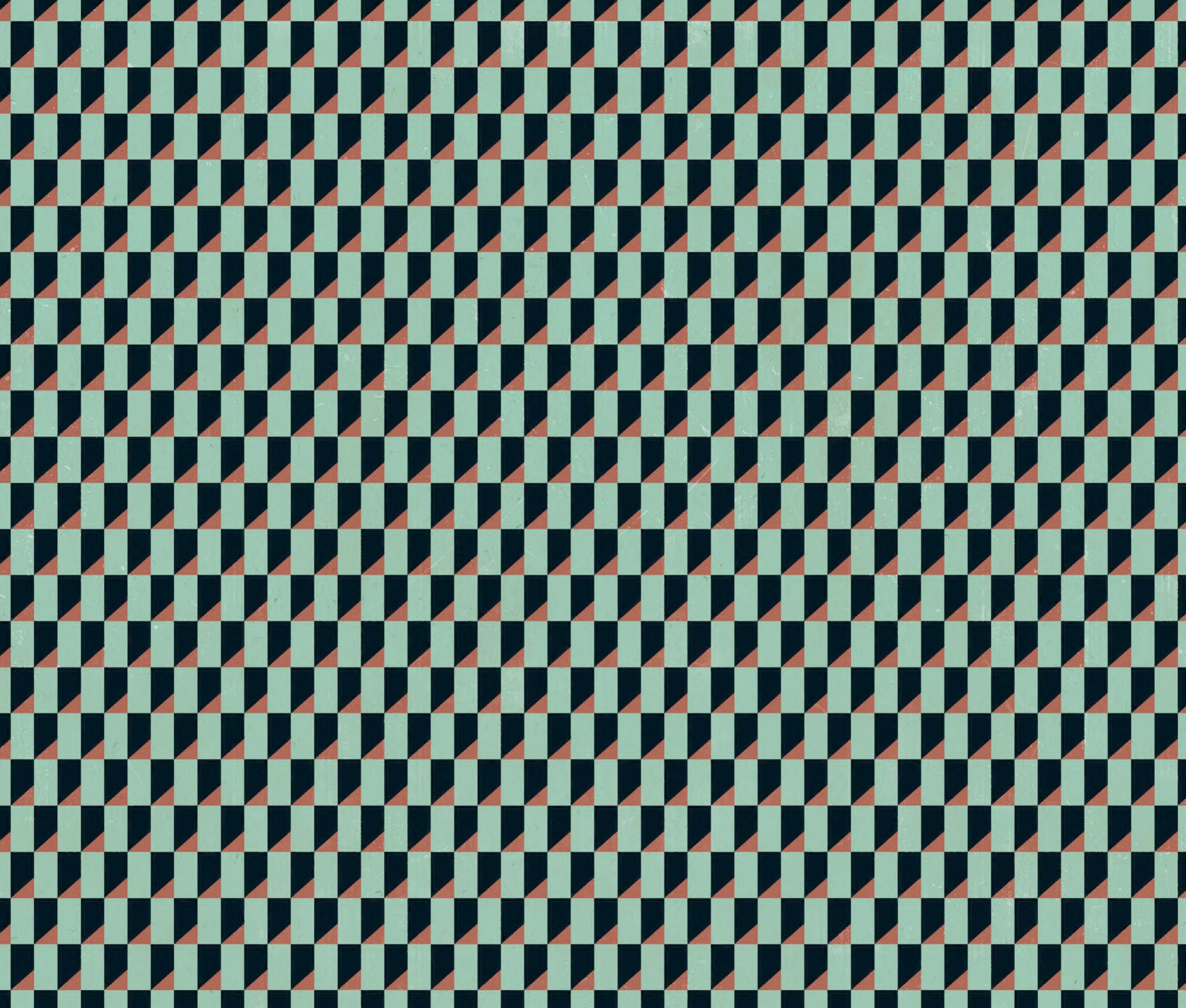


# IN PERPETUITY

By Peter and Maria Hoey









# IN PERPETUITY

by  
Peter and Maria Hoey

We have only a little time to please the living.  
But all eternity to love the dead.

–Sophocles, *Antigone*



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# IN PERPETUITY

## WAY DOWN DEEP

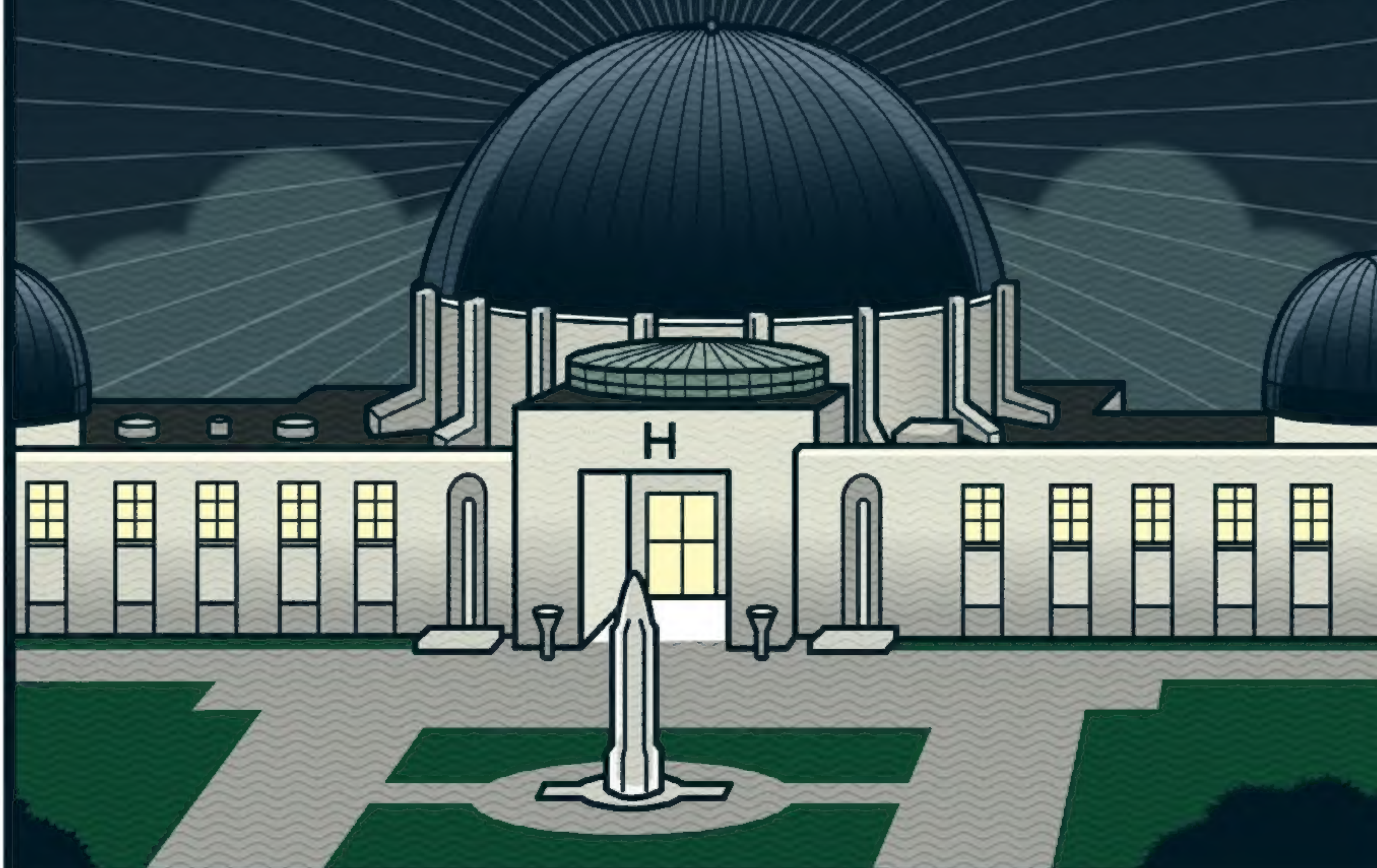
*Chapters One through Ten*

## UNDER THE RIVER

*Chapters Eleven through Eighteen*

## THE LONG BLACK VEIL

*Chapters Nineteen through Twenty-Six*





A stylized illustration of a city street at night. The scene features several modern buildings with geometric shapes and flat colors. A large, dark, circular moon hangs in the dark blue sky. Streetlights with white poles and black lampshades are positioned along the sidewalk. A traffic light on the left shows a green light. The foreground shows a dark road with white lane markings. The overall style is graphic and minimalist, with a focus on urban architecture and lighting.

# WAY DOWN DEEP



# CHAPTER

# 1

GAS

HE GAVE IT A FILL.  
TEN GALLONS  
OF REGULAR AT  
48 CENTS PER.

OUT OF A 20,  
THAT WAS  
\$15.20 BACK.

GAS

THE GAS STATION WAS RIGHT  
OFF THE HARBOR FREEWAY.

AN UNUSED VENDING MACHINE  
SAT IN THE OFFICE. THERE WAS  
A MIRROR ON ITS FRONT PANEL.

PEANUTS

PEANUTS

WHEN HE LOOKED  
AT ITS SURFACE  
HE SAW ONLY THE  
PUMPS BEHIND HIM.

GAS

IN THE  
AFTERLIFE,  
THE DEAD  
HAD NO  
REFLECTION.

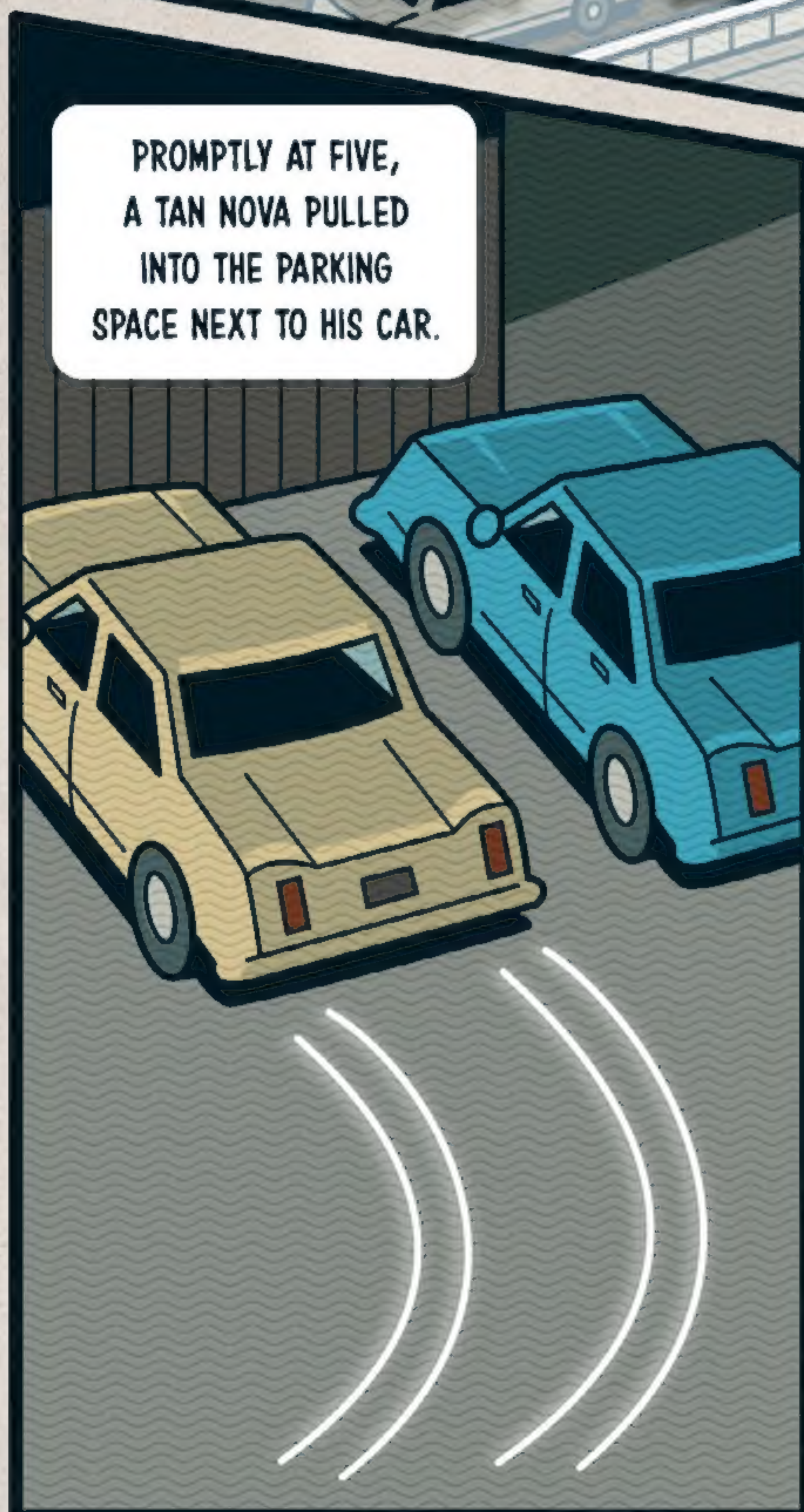


THE TRAFFIC ON THE FREEWAY  
BARELY MOVED. THE EXHAUST  
FROM THE IDLING CARS GAVE  
THE AIR A BLuish HAZE. NEAR  
THE HORIZON HUNG THE BLACK SUN,  
AN UNBLINKING EYE IN THE SKY.



HIS MEETING WAS  
AT 6 P.M. HE'D NEED  
TO LEAVE SOON  
IN ORDER TO STAY  
ON SCHEDULE.

PROMPTLY AT FIVE,  
A TAN NOVA PULLED  
INTO THE PARKING  
SPACE NEXT TO HIS CAR.



THE SECOND SHIFT GUY  
WAS ALWAYS ON TIME.



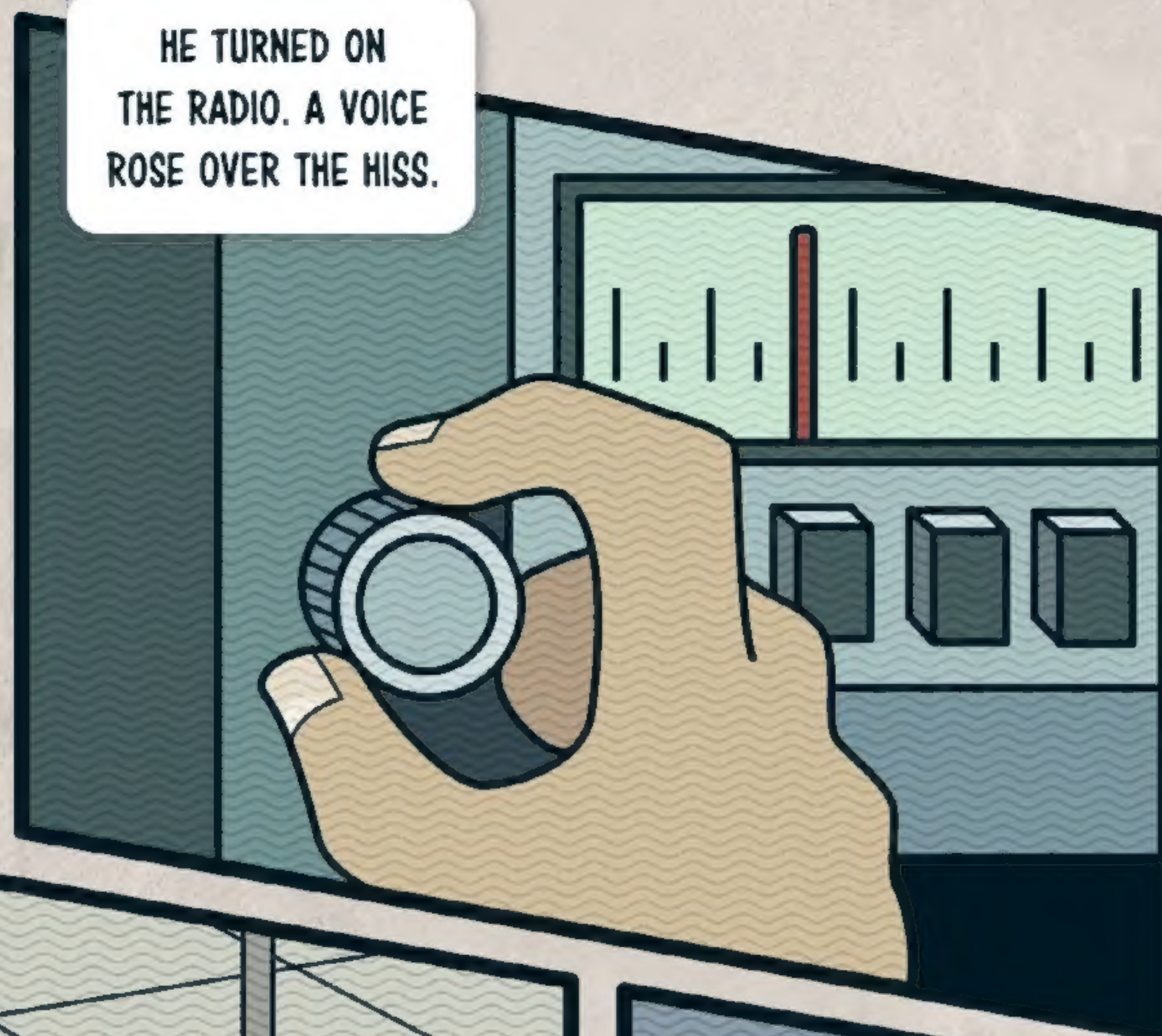
THE DRAWER COUNT  
IS ON THE DESK.







HE DROVE NORTH AND  
KEPT A STEADY PACE  
PAST THE SLOWPOKES.



HE TURNED ON  
THE RADIO. A VOICE  
ROSE OVER THE HISS.



♪ "THE SMILE YOU ARE SMILING, YOU WERE SMILING THEN.  
BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE OR WHEN." ♪



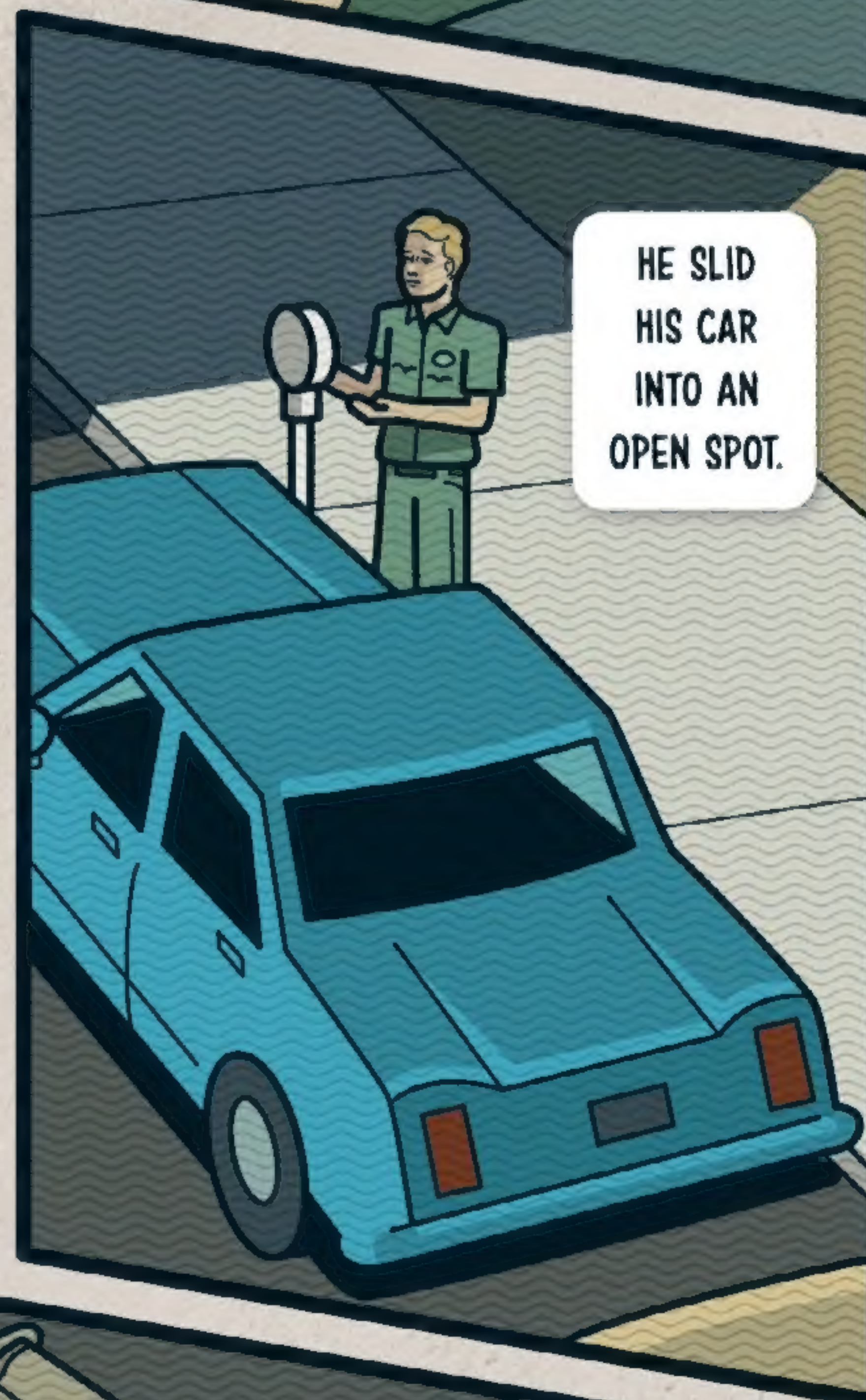
RODGERS  
AND HART,  
HE THOUGHT.



UP AHEAD,  
A LIGHT  
WAS OUT.



AN OFFICER  
DIRECTED  
TRAFFIC.

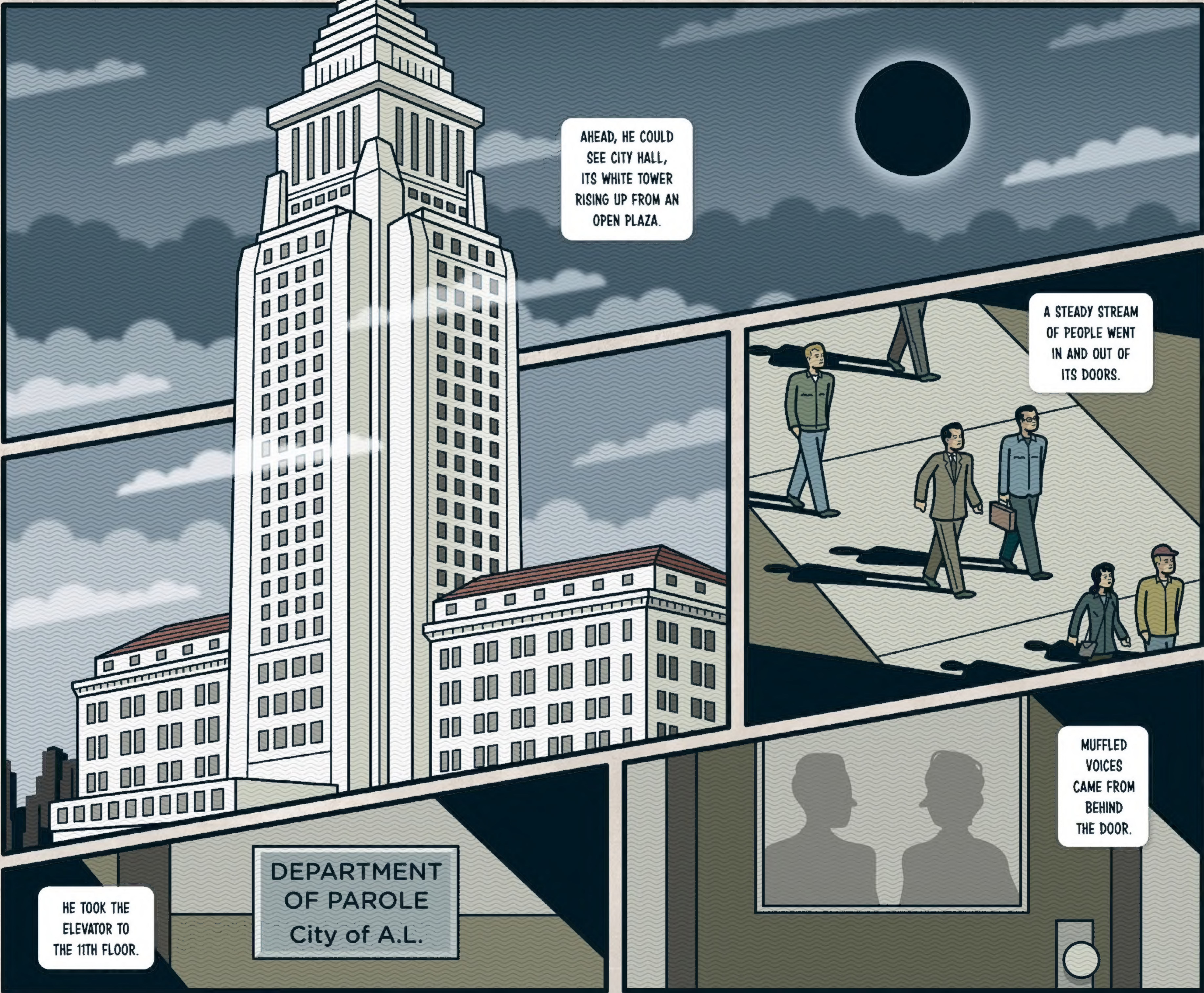


HE SLID  
HIS CAR  
INTO AN  
OPEN SPOT.



HE'D WALK THE REST OF THE WAY.  
IT WAS FASTER THAN DRIVING.





AHEAD, HE COULD  
SEE CITY HALL,  
ITS WHITE TOWER  
RISING UP FROM AN  
OPEN PLAZA.

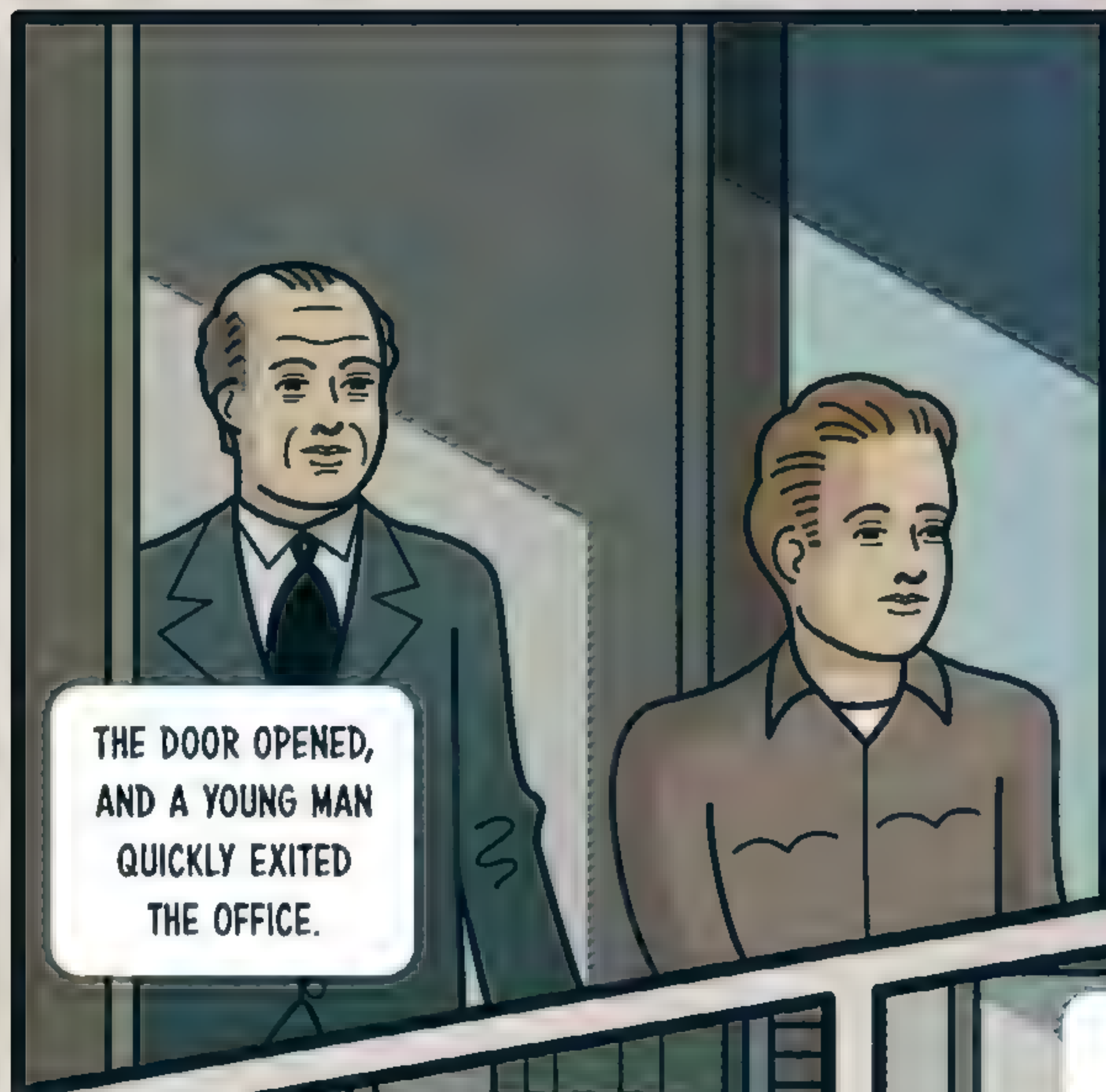
A STEADY STREAM  
OF PEOPLE WENT  
IN AND OUT OF  
ITS DOORS.

MUFFLED  
VOICES  
CAME FROM  
BEHIND  
THE DOOR.

HE TOOK THE  
ELEVATOR TO  
THE 11TH FLOOR.

DEPARTMENT  
OF PAROLE  
City of A.L.

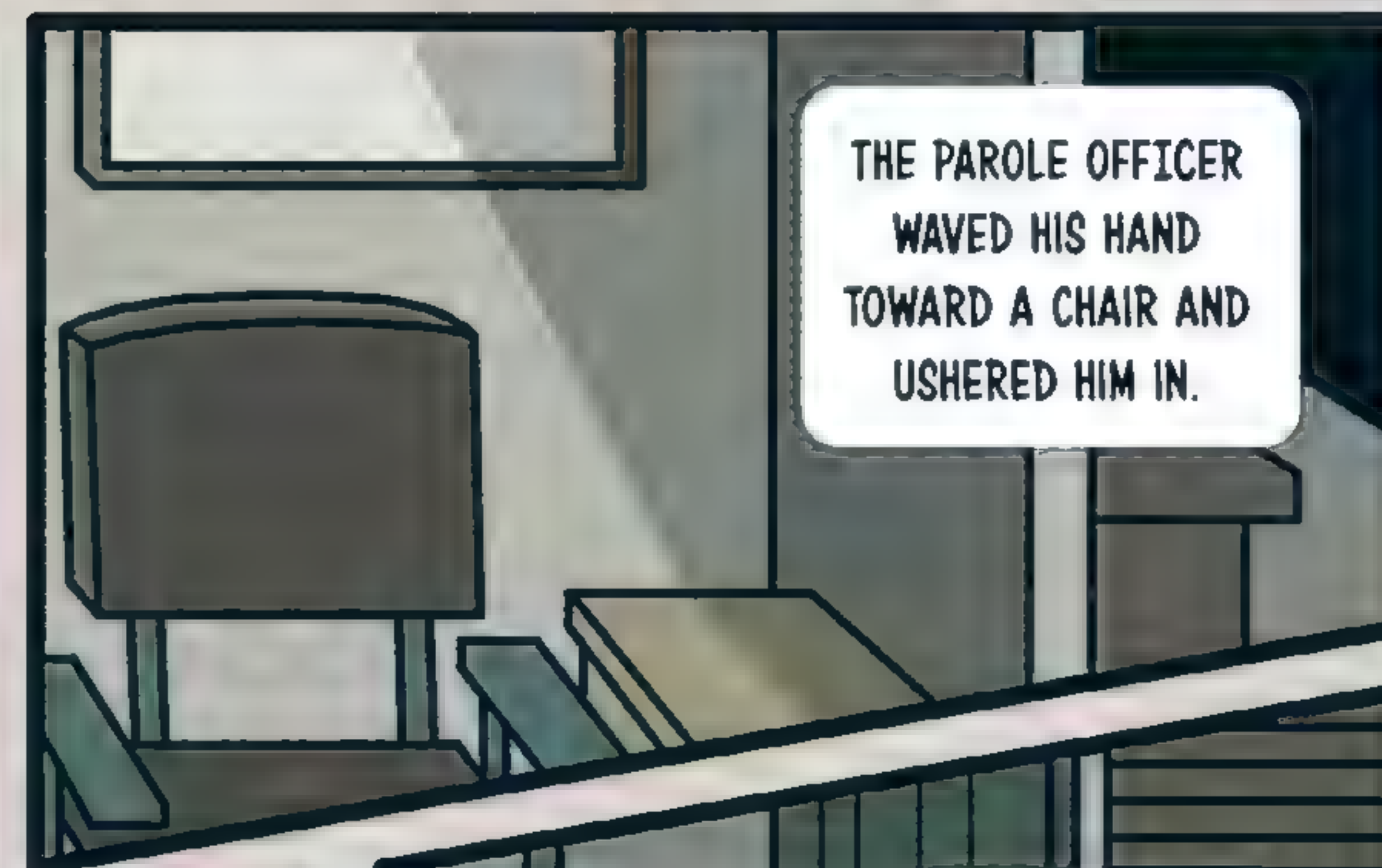




THE DOOR OPENED,  
AND A YOUNG MAN  
QUICKLY EXITED  
THE OFFICE.



SIX O'CLOCK  
APPOINTMENT?



THE PAROLE OFFICER  
WAVED HIS HAND  
TOWARD A CHAIR AND  
USHERED HIM IN.



OKAY, JAMES DEARBORN.  
A.K.A. JIM DEARBORN.  
D.O.D. 9.26.95.

HE SIGHED  
AND QUICKLY  
SCANNED  
THE FILE.



ANY BAD  
DREAMS  
LATELY?

I NEVER  
REMEMBER  
MY DREAMS.



HOW ABOUT  
VOICES? DO  
YOU HEAR  
ANY VOICES?

THE ONLY  
VOICES I  
HEAR ARE ON  
THE RADIO.



YEAH. YEAH.  
I GOT YOU.  
THAT'S CLEVER.

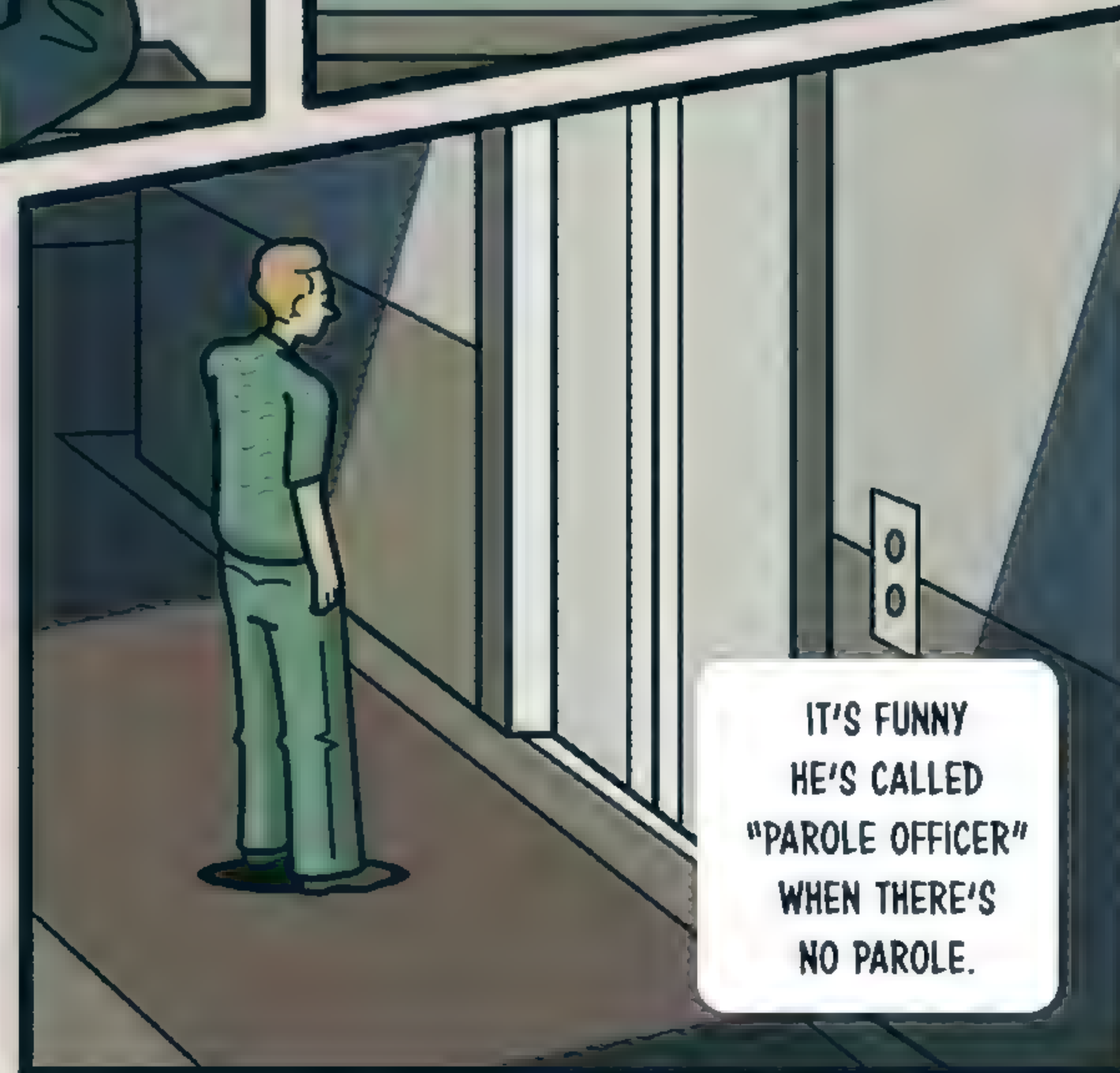


OKAY,  
WE'RE GOOD.  
YOUR NEXT  
APPOINTMENT  
IS IN 60 DAYS,  
UNLESS...



UNLESS?

UNLESS YOU  
BREAK ANY  
OF THE TERMS  
OF OUR DEAL.



IT'S FUNNY  
HE'S CALLED  
"PAROLE OFFICER"  
WHEN THERE'S  
NO PAROLE.





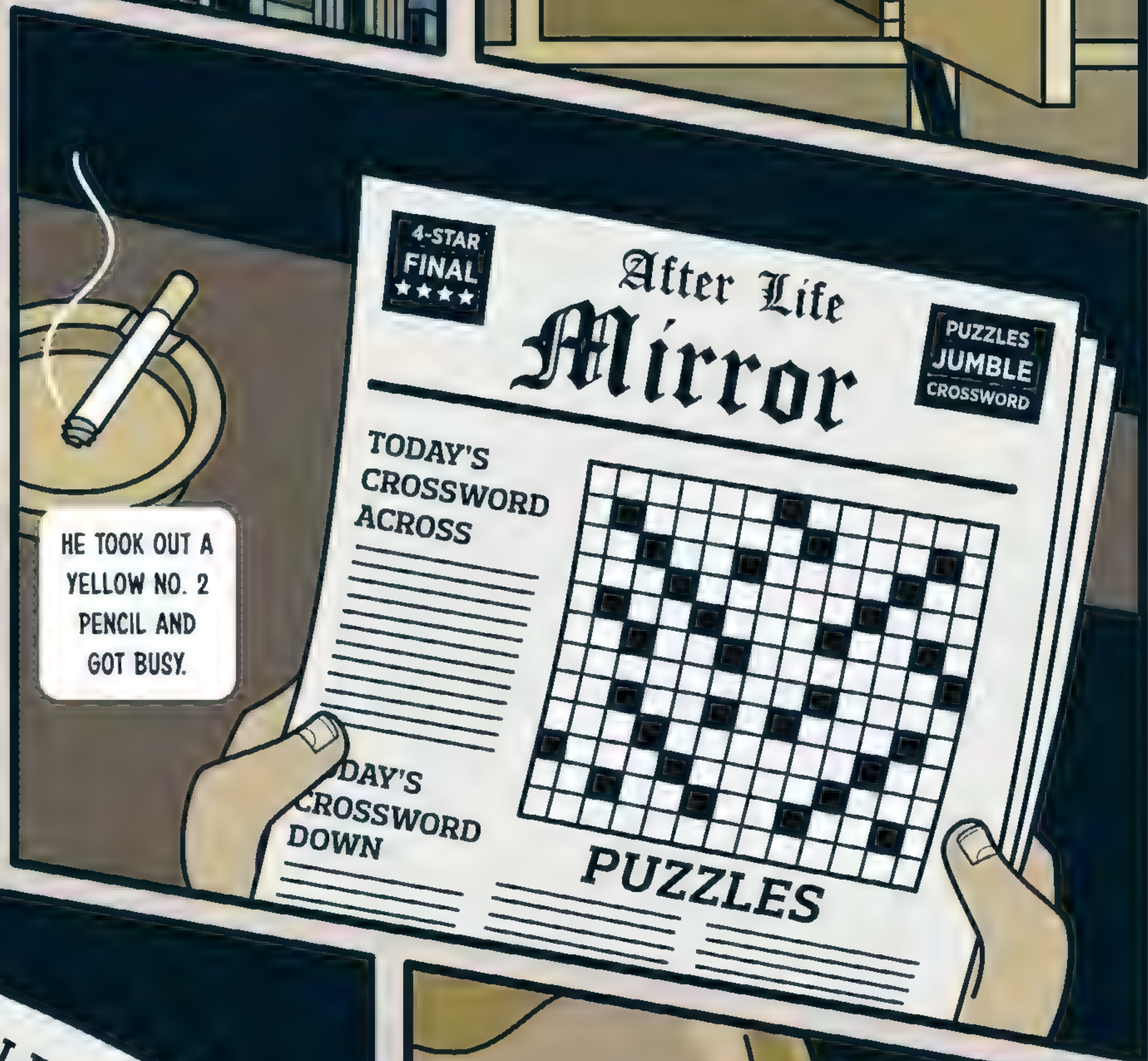
HE STOPPED AT THE NEWSTAND  
ON HIS WAY BACK TO HIS APARTMENT  
AND BOUGHT THE PAPER AND  
A PACK OF CIGARETTES.



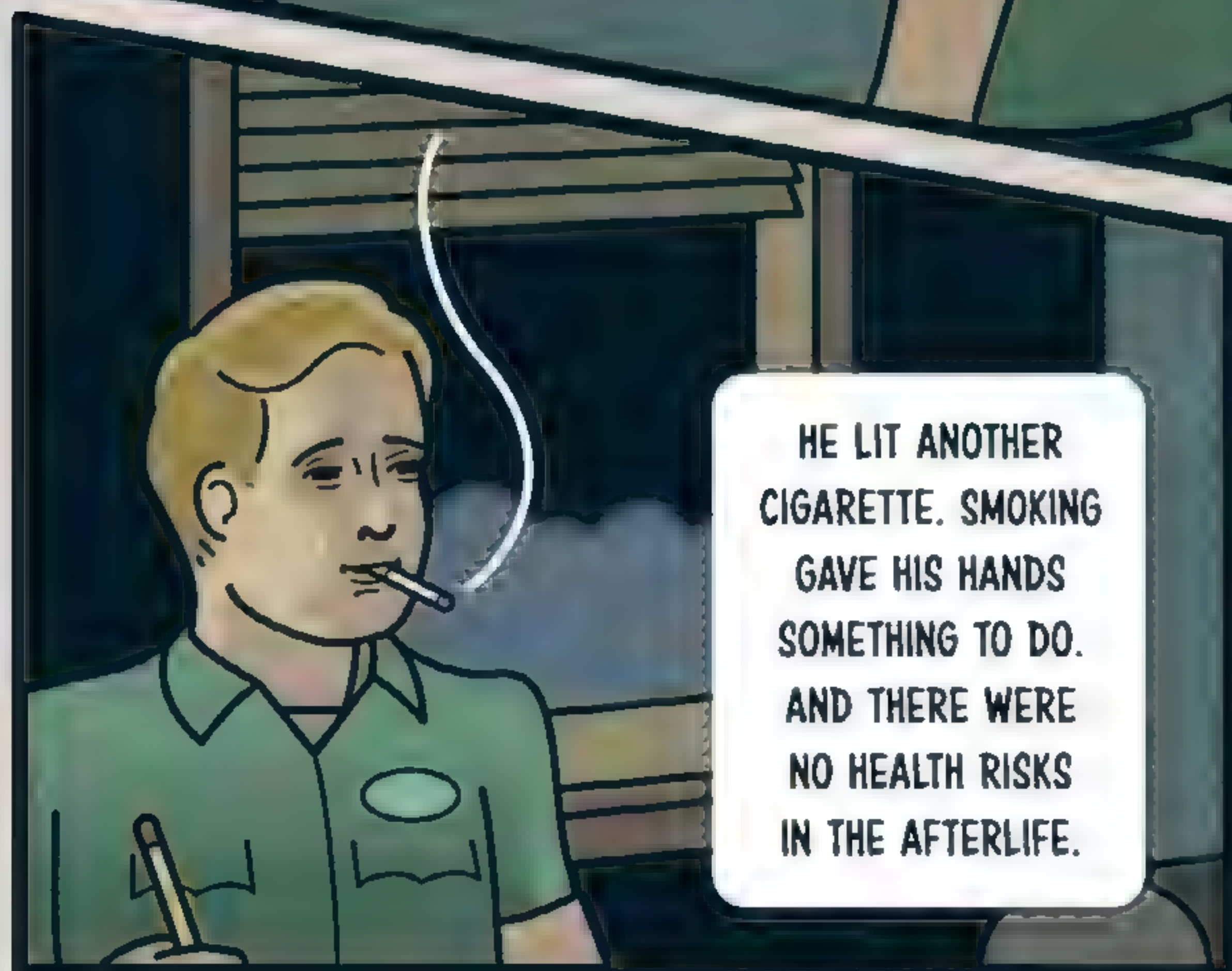
IN THE LOBBY,  
HE CHECKED  
HIS MAILBOX.  
NOTHING.



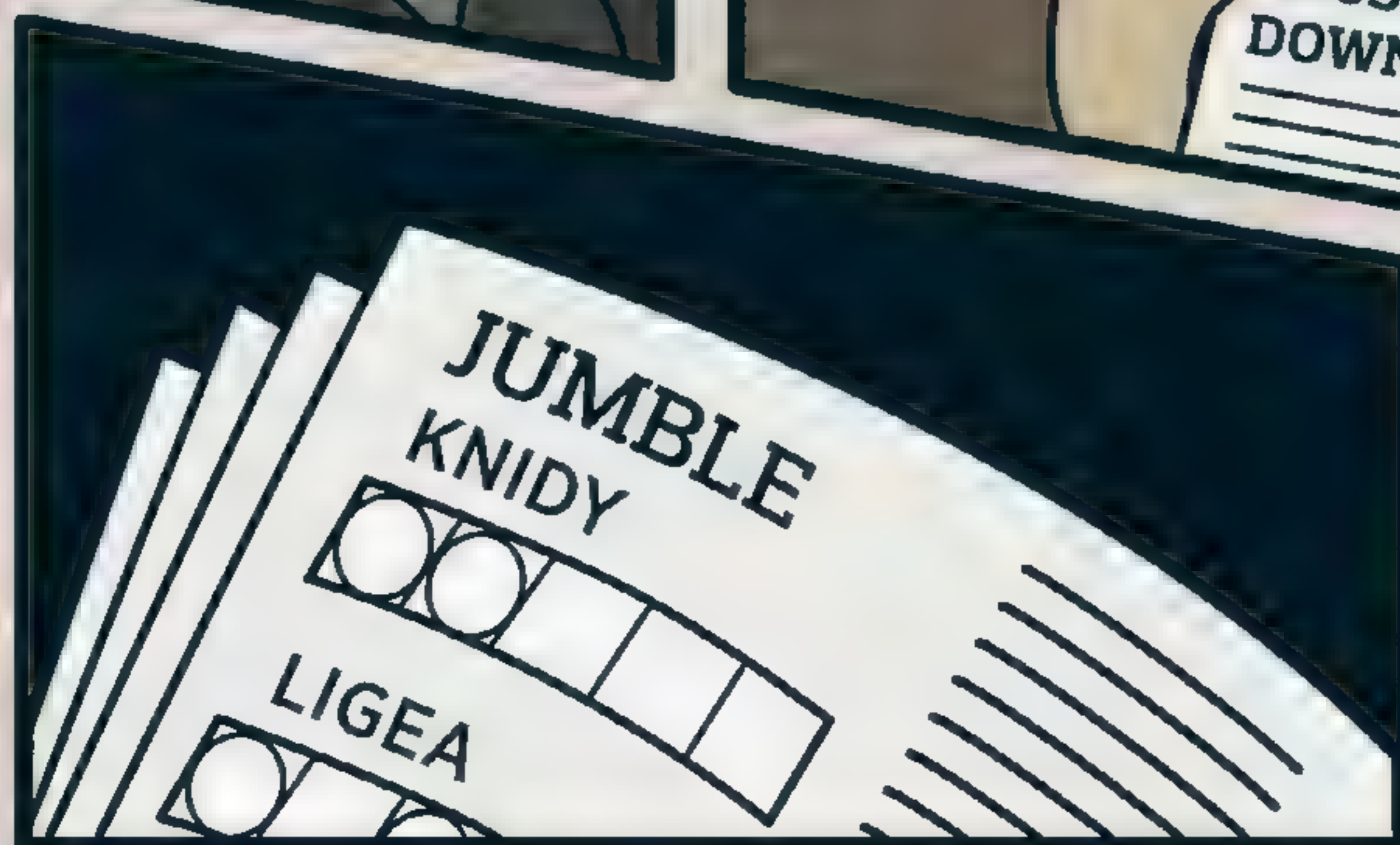
HIS VIEW LOOKED  
OUT AT ECHO PARK.  
THERE WERE NO  
RESTAURANTS OR  
LIQUOR STORES,  
BUT THERE WERE  
LOADS OF USED  
BOOKSTORES.



HE TOOK OUT A  
YELLOW NO. 2  
PENCIL AND  
GOT BUSY.



HE LIT ANOTHER  
CIGARETTE. SMOKING  
GAVE HIS HANDS  
SOMETHING TO DO.  
AND THERE WERE  
NO HEALTH RISKS  
IN THE AFTERLIFE.



BY 10:30 HE WAS  
TIRED OF PUZZLES.





HE PUT ON  
A JACKET  
AND WALKED  
DOWNSTAIRS.

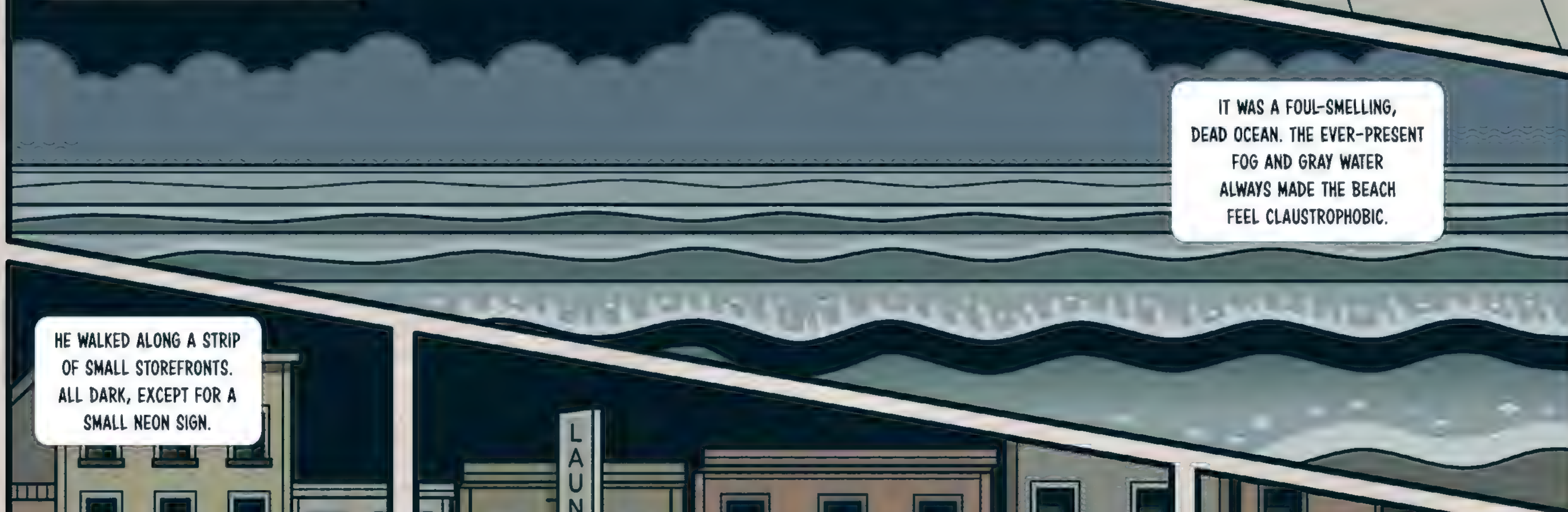


HE HEADED TO A DECENT  
USED BOOKSTORE.  
ALL PAPERBACKS.



OPEN SEVEN DAYS,  
11 A.M. TO 1 A.M.  
BUT NOT TONIGHT.

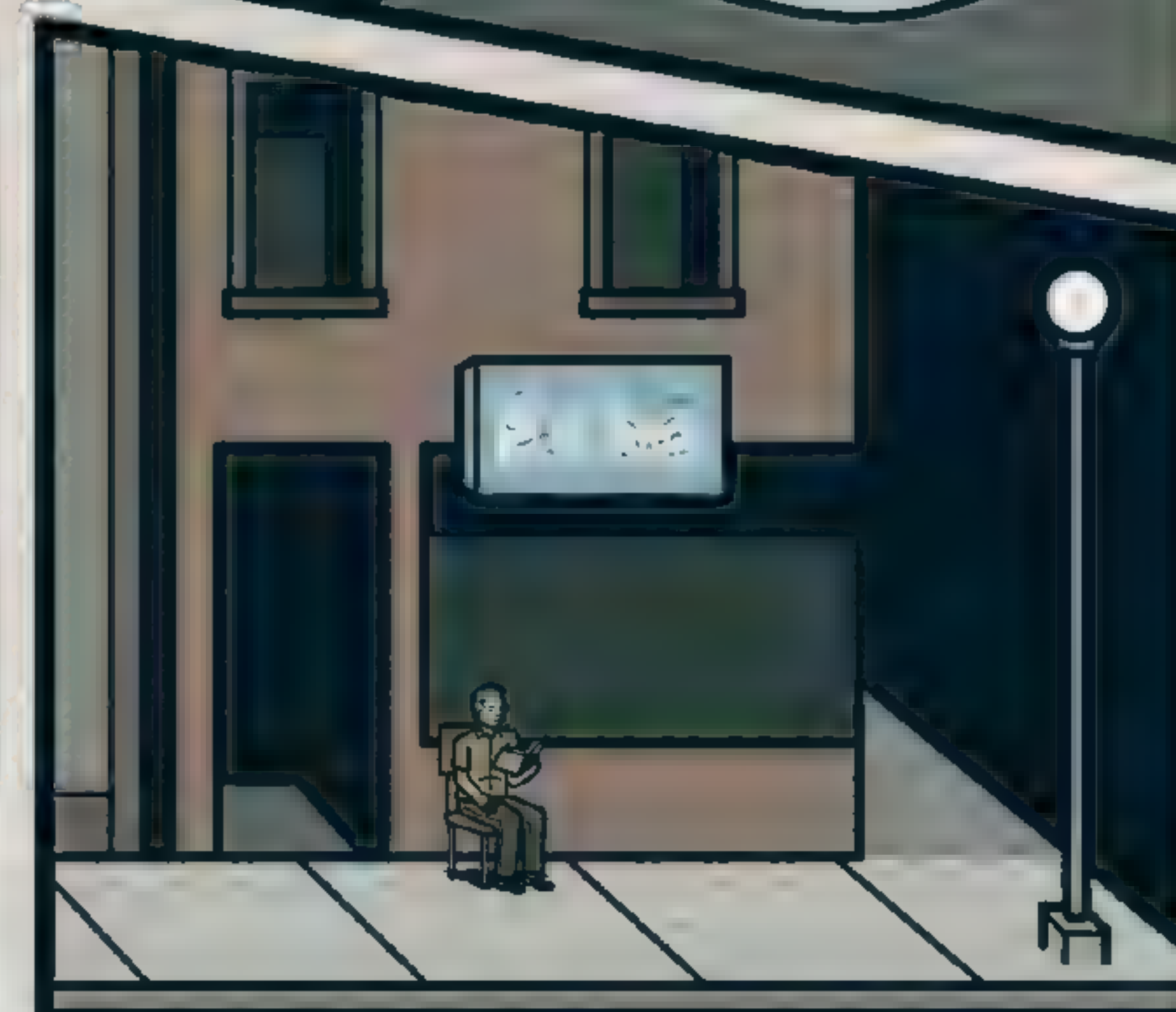
BECAUSE OF TRAFFIC, THE DRIVE TO  
SANTA MONICA COULD TAKE SIX HOURS.  
HE DIDN'T LIKE THE BEACH MUCH ANYWAY.



IT WAS A FOUL-SMELLING,  
DEAD OCEAN. THE EVER-PRESENT  
FOG AND GRAY WATER  
ALWAYS MADE THE BEACH  
FEEL CLAUSTROPHOBIC.



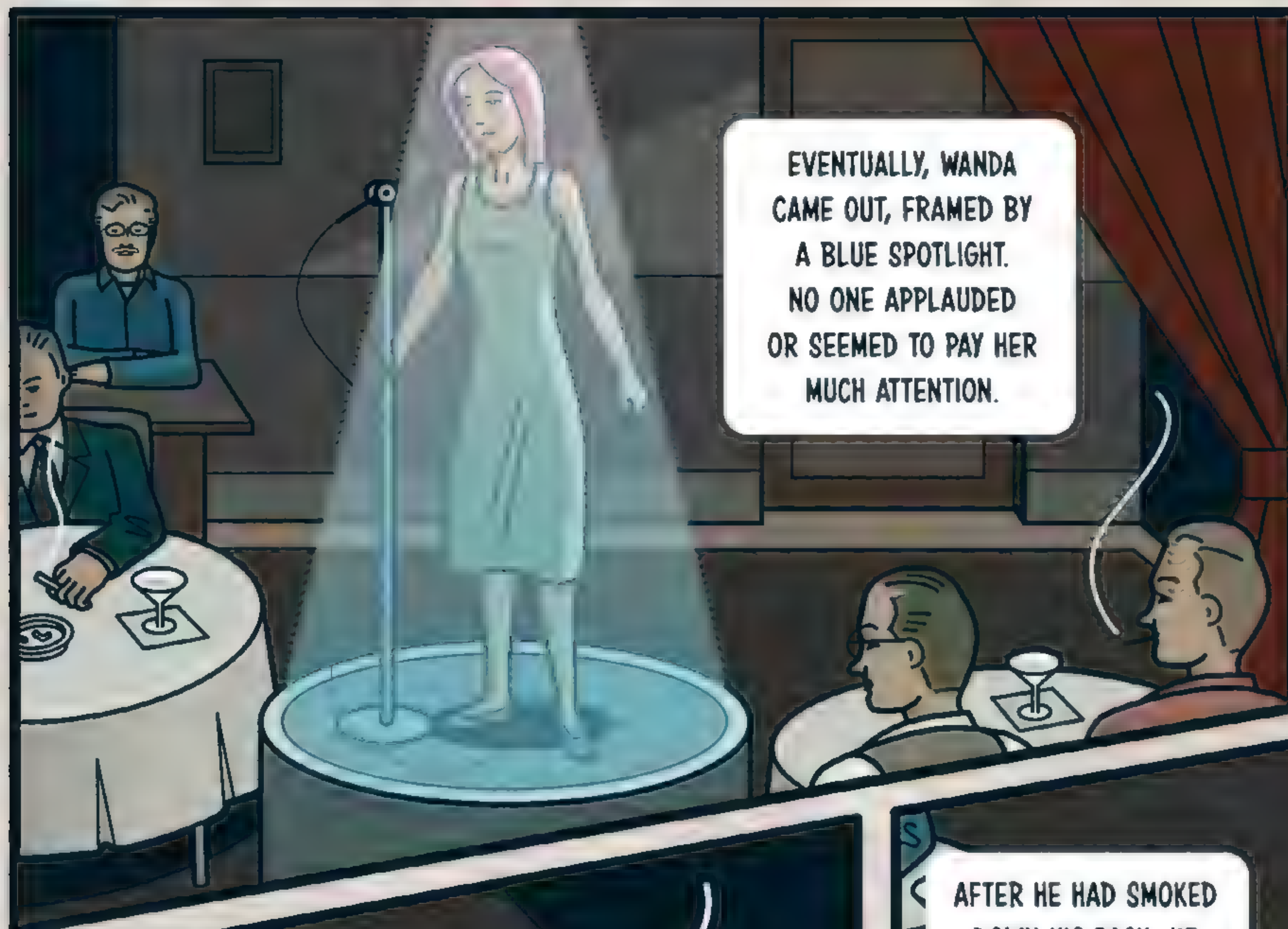
HE WALKED ALONG A STRIP  
OF SMALL STOREFRONTS.  
ALL DARK, EXCEPT FOR A  
SMALL NEON SIGN.











EVENTUALLY, WANDA  
CAME OUT, FRAMED BY  
A BLUE SPOTLIGHT.  
NO ONE APPLAUDED  
OR SEEMED TO PAY HER  
MUCH ATTENTION.



SHE SANG BALLADS.  
HER SLOW PACING AND  
UNCERTAIN DELIVERY  
MADE THEM SOUND LIKE  
A 45 PLAYED AT 33 RPM.



JIM SAT AT THE BAR,  
STARING INTO  
HIS EMPTY GLASS.



AFTER HE HAD SMOKED  
DOWN HIS PACK, HE  
DECIDED TO LEAVE.



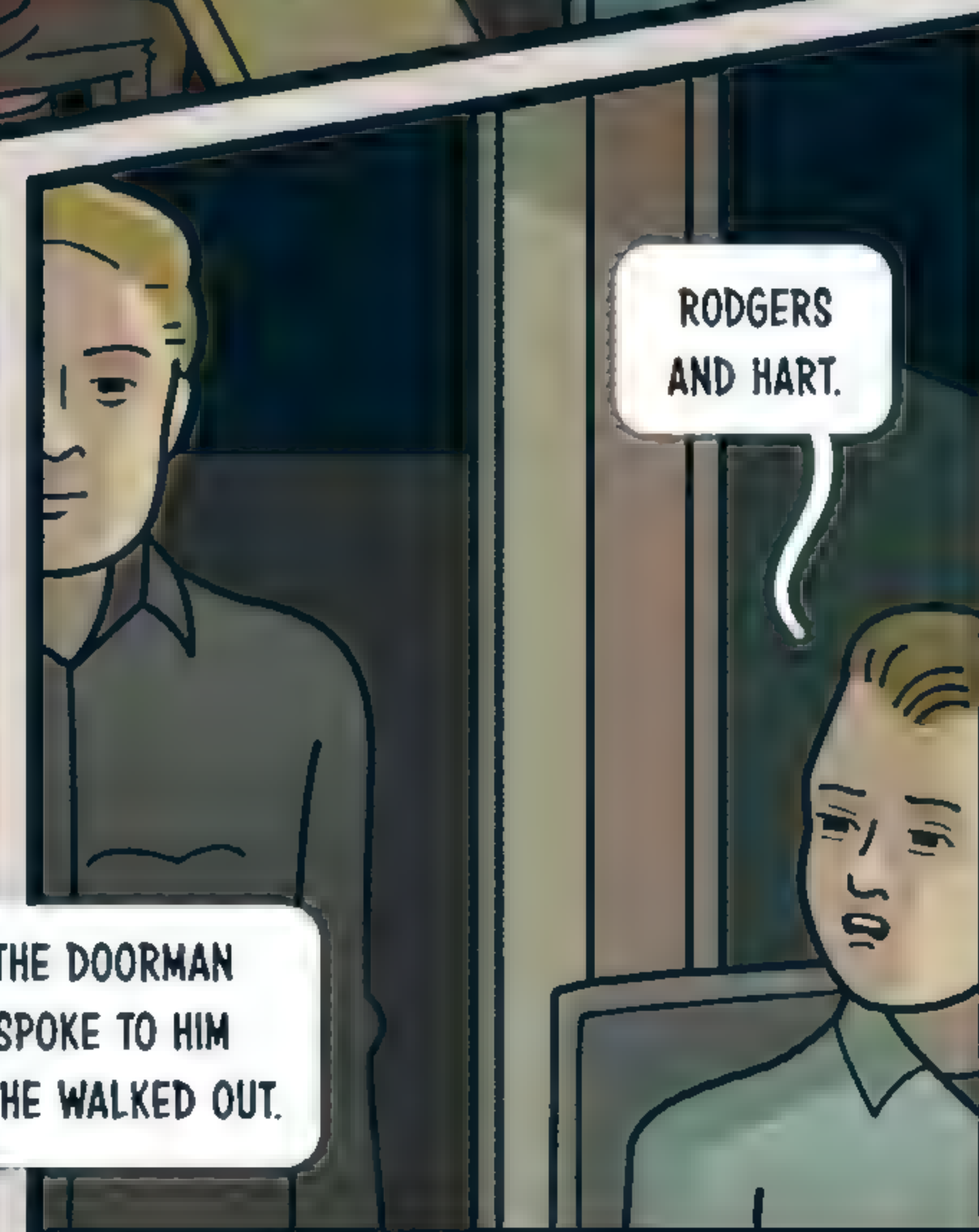
RIGHT THEN,  
WANDA BEGAN  
SINGING THE SONG  
HE'D HEARD ON  
THE RADIO.



"IT SEEMS  
WE STOOD  
AND TALKED  
LIKE THIS  
BEFORE..."



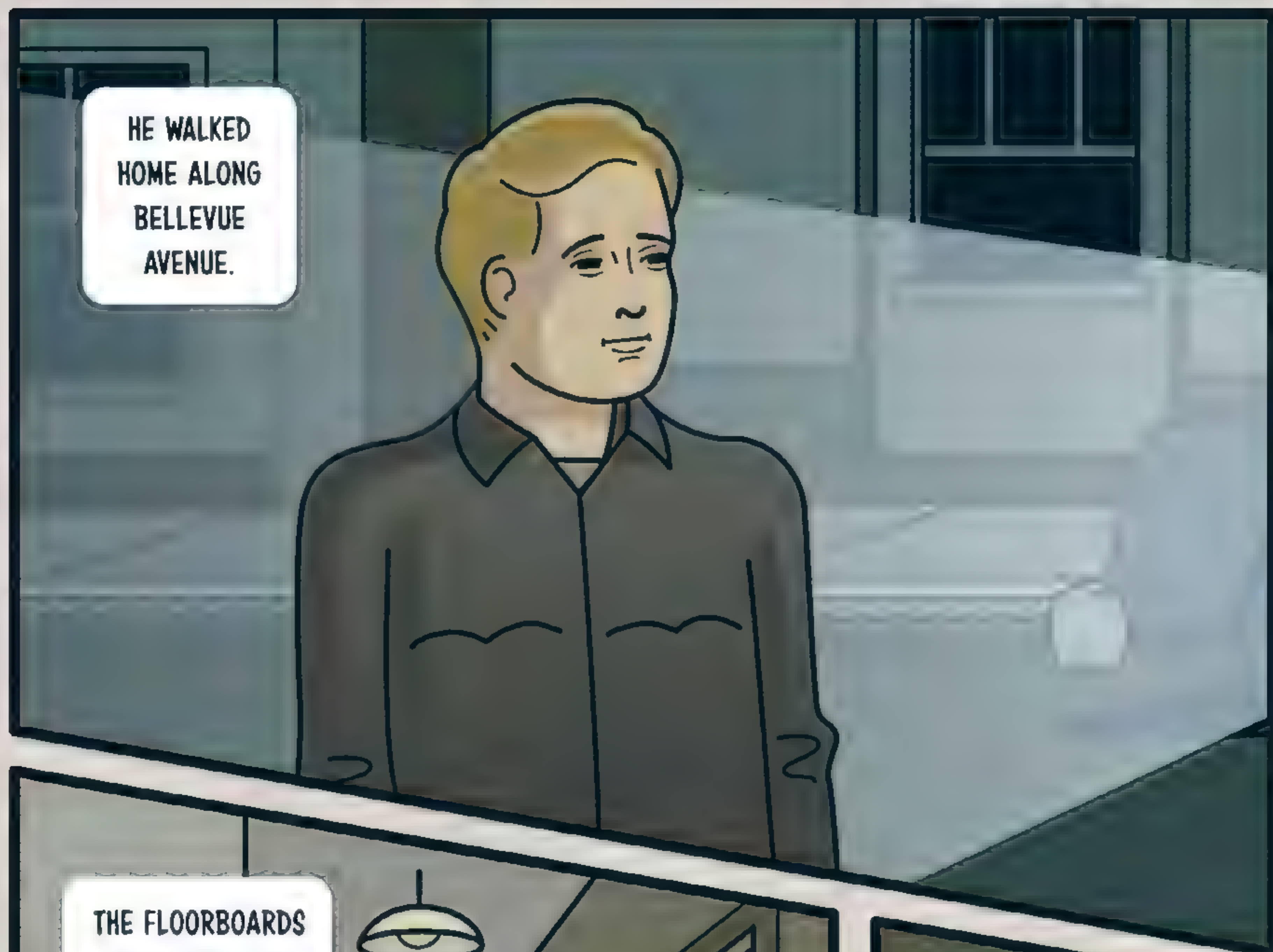
"...BUT I CAN'T  
REMEMBER  
WHERE...  
OR WHEN..."



RODGERS  
AND HART.

THE DOORMAN  
SPOKE TO HIM  
AS HE WALKED OUT.





HE WALKED  
HOME ALONG  
BELLEVUE  
AVENUE.



A CRUISER DROVE SLOWLY PAST HIM.  
THE OFFICERS GAZED AT HIM WITH  
IMPASSIVE EXPRESSIONS AND MOVED ON.



THE FLOORBOARDS  
CREAKED AS HE  
WALKED UP THE  
THREE FLIGHTS  
TO HIS PLACE.



HE DIDN'T  
BOTHER  
TURNING ON  
THE LIGHTS.



OUTSIDE, THE HUM  
OF THE TRAFFIC  
DRONED ON.  
AT LEAST THERE  
WERE NO HORNS.  
THAT WAS A  
THING THAT HAD  
TAKEN A WHILE TO  
GET USED TO.



# CHAPTER

## 2

THE ROUTINE AT THE STATION  
WAS ALWAYS FULL SERVICE.

IT WAS ONLY  
LEADED GAS.

YOU POPPED  
THE HOOD  
AND CHECKED  
THE OIL  
AND WATER.

AFTER THAT,  
YOU CLEANED  
THE WINDOWS.

THE WHOLE AFFAIR  
TOOK BETWEEN TWO  
AND FIVE MINUTES.

THERE WAS ALSO  
THE JOB OF SELLING  
CIGARETTES  
AND EMPTYING  
ASHTRAYS.





A RED SEDAN  
DRIFTED IN  
OFF THE STREET.



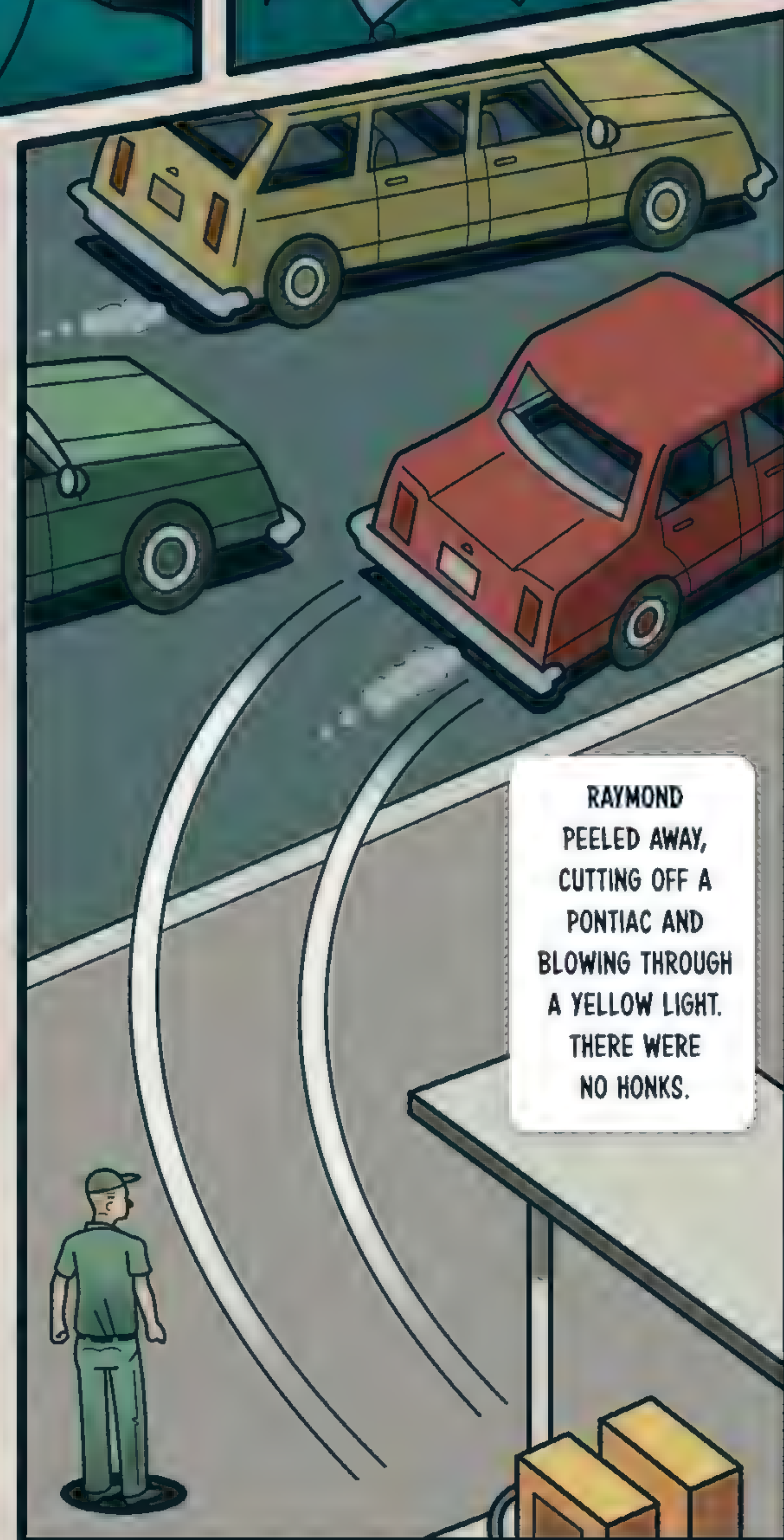
FILL IT.

HE CHECKED UNDER  
THE HOOD WHILE  
THE PUMP RAN.

HOW MUCH, SIR?

TOPPED OFF AT  
EIGHT DOLLARS, SIR.  
YOUR OIL AND WATER  
LOOK FINE.







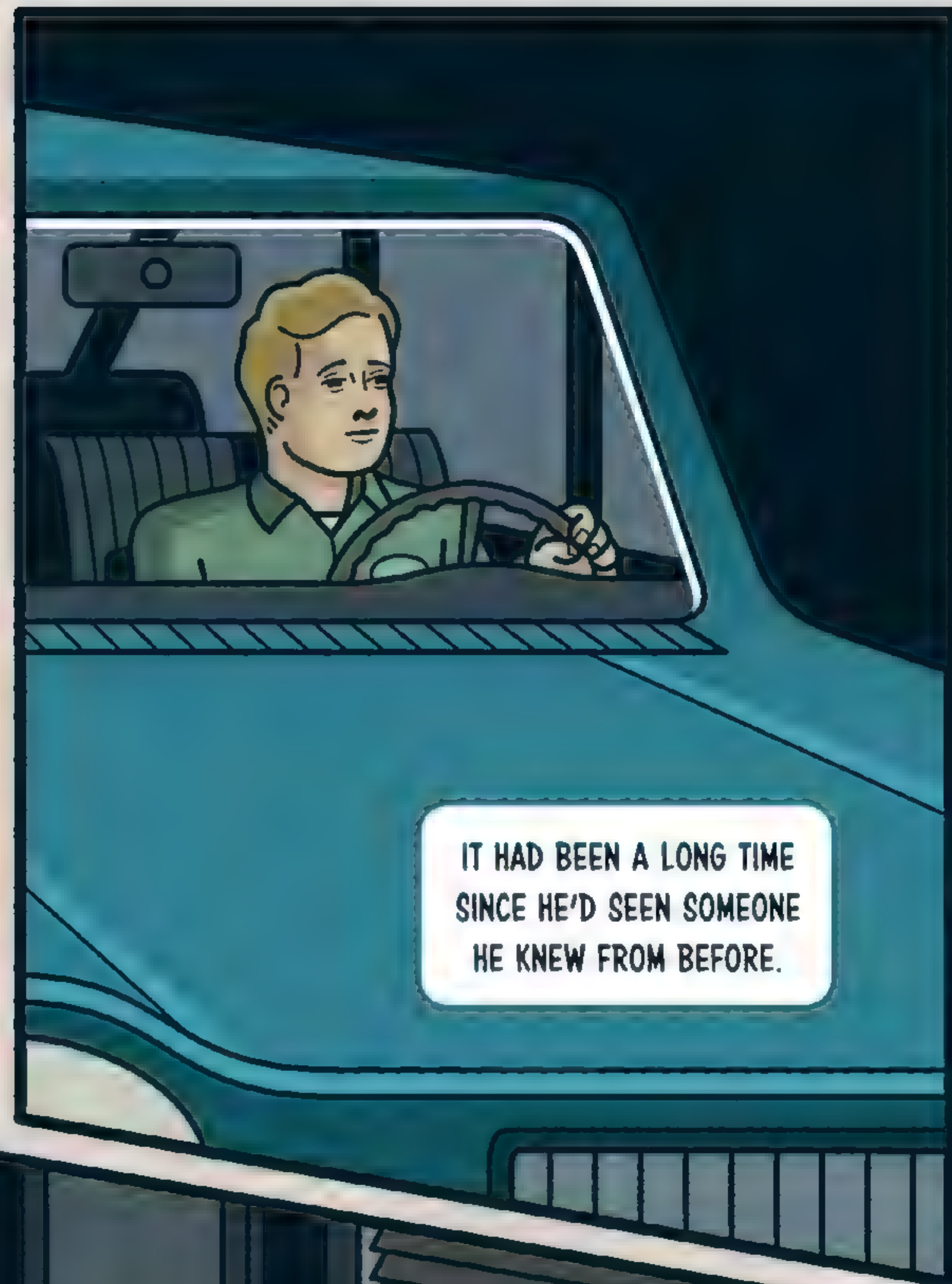


THE DRIVE HOME  
TOOK LONGER  
THAN USUAL.



HE DIDN'T BOTHER  
WITH THE RADIO.  
HE HAD SOMETHING  
ON HIS MIND...

...RAYMOND.



IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME  
SINCE HE'D SEEN SOMEONE  
HE KNEW FROM BEFORE.



THEY'D WORKED  
TOGETHER FOR A  
TIME, BACK WHEN HE  
WAS ALIVE. WHAT  
HE REMEMBERED  
FROM BACK THEN  
WAS BAD.

AND FROM THE CURL  
OF RAYMOND'S SMILE,  
JIM KNEW HE'D BE BACK.



BY 10 P.M. HE WAS  
ANXIOUS AND OUT  
OF SMOKES. THERE  
WAS AN ALL-NIGHT  
CINEMA ON FRANKLIN.  
MAYBE THAT WOULD  
CALM HIM DOWN.





A POLICE CAR SLOWLY  
FOLLOWED ALONGSIDE HIM.



THE STREETLAMPS  
MADE A BUZZING NOISE  
IN THE DRIZZLE.



"PROWLER CALL.  
200 BLOCK OF  
SOUTH ALAMEDA.  
FOUR REPORTS.  
ALL UNITS."

10-4 ROGER.

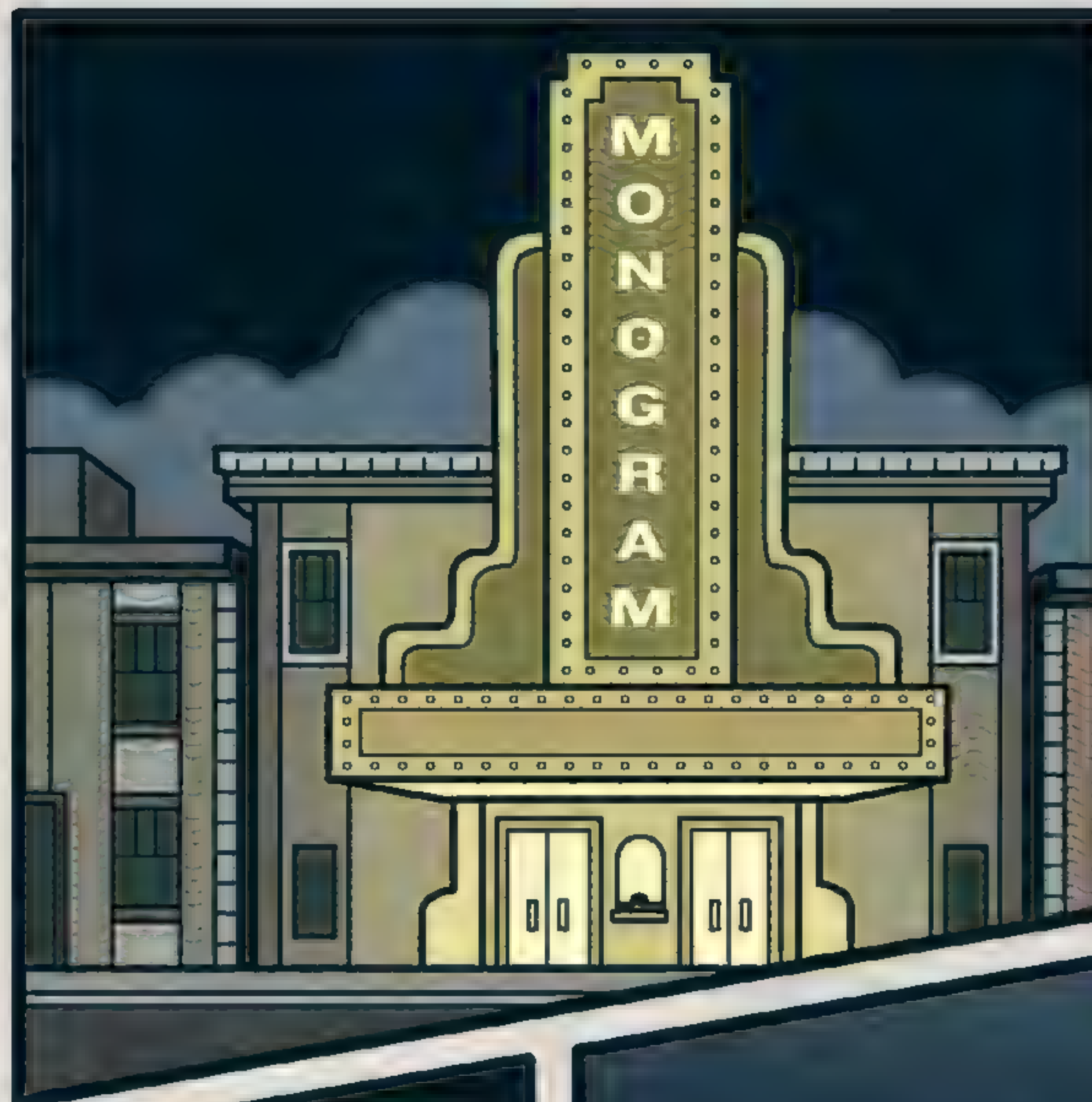


THE COP CAR  
PEELED AWAY.

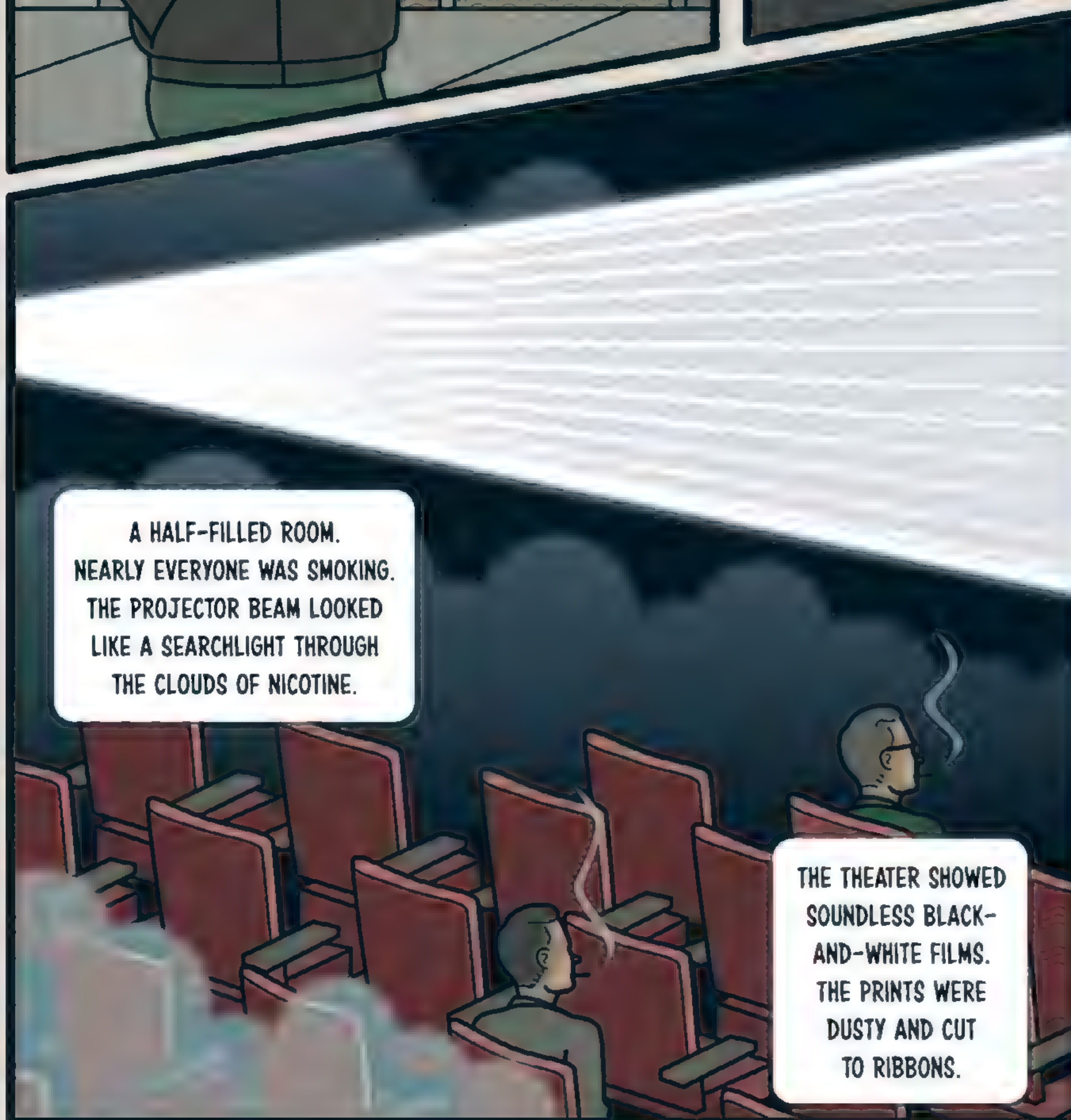




FROM THE END OF  
THE DIMLY LIT  
STREET, HE SAW  
THE THEATER.

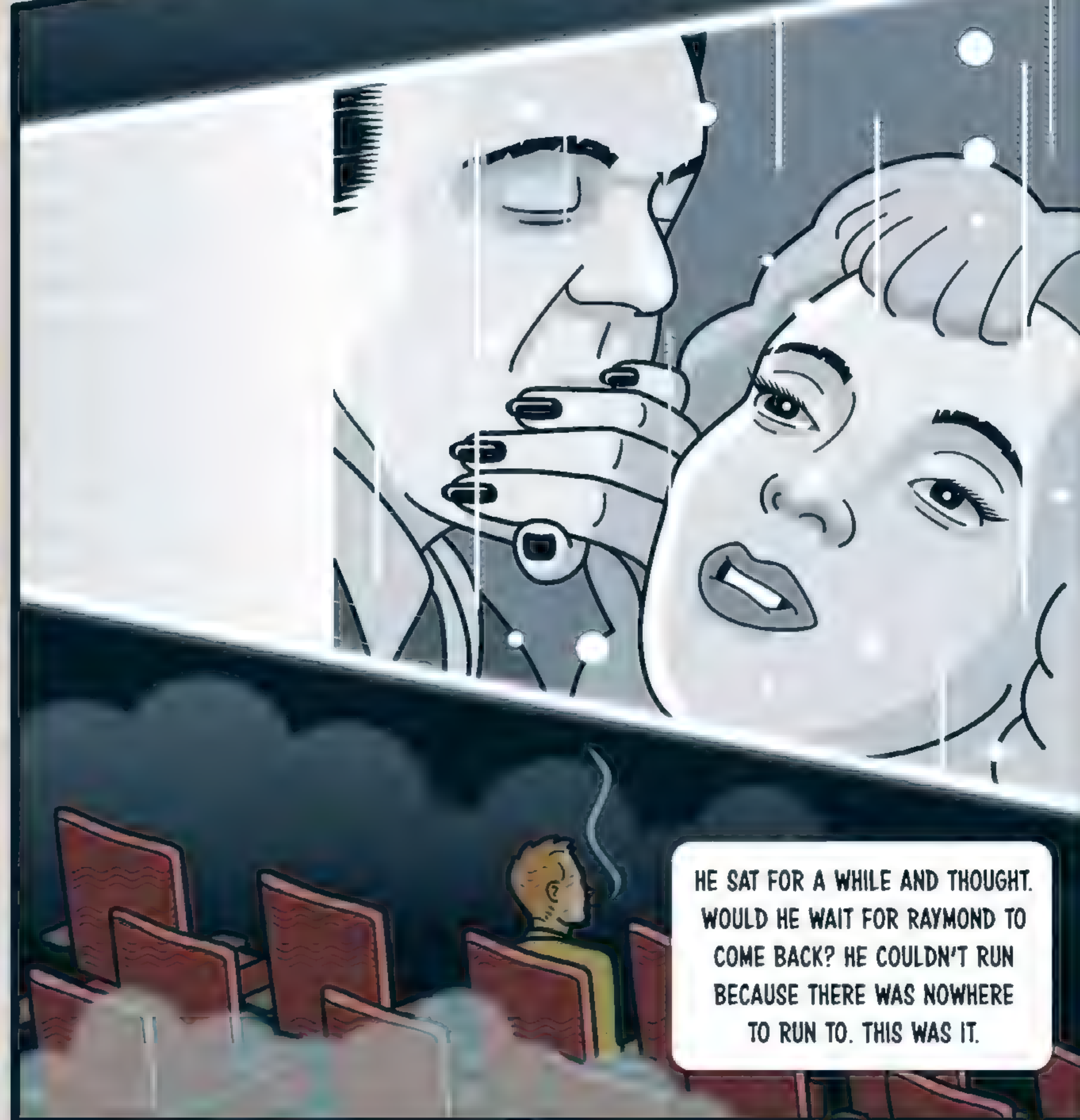


HE BOUGHT  
A TICKET  
FOR FIFTY  
CENTS AND  
WENT IN.



A HALF-FILLED ROOM.  
NEARLY EVERYONE WAS SMOKING.  
THE PROJECTOR BEAM LOOKED  
LIKE A SEARCHLIGHT THROUGH  
THE CLOUDS OF NICOTINE.

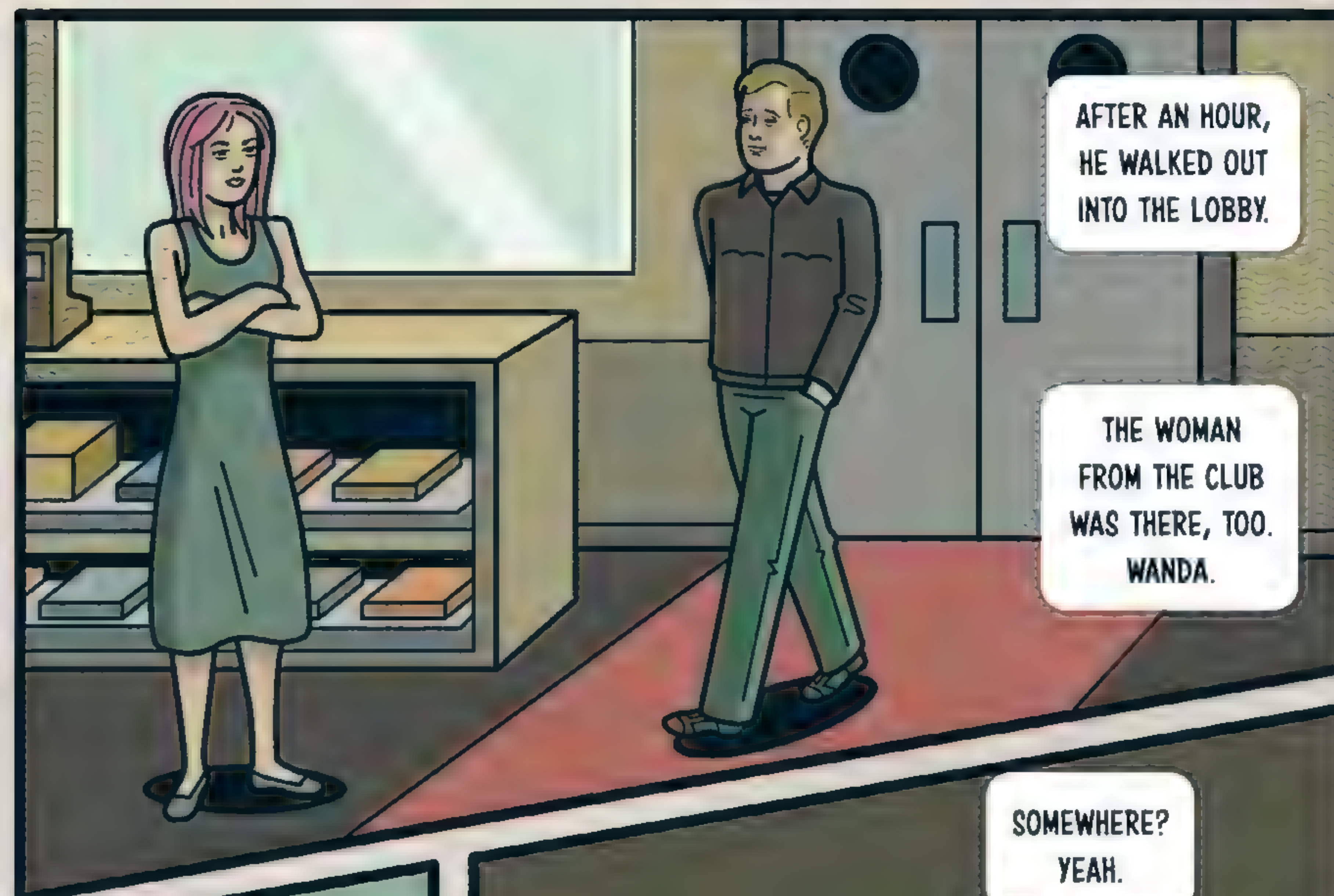
THE THEATER SHOWED  
SOUNDLESS BLACK-  
AND-WHITE FILMS.  
THE PRINTS WERE  
DUSTY AND CUT  
TO RIBBONS.



HE SAT FOR A WHILE AND THOUGHT.  
WOULD HE WAIT FOR RAYMOND TO  
COME BACK? HE COULDN'T RUN  
BECAUSE THERE WAS NOWHERE  
TO RUN TO. THIS WAS IT.



# CHAPTER 3

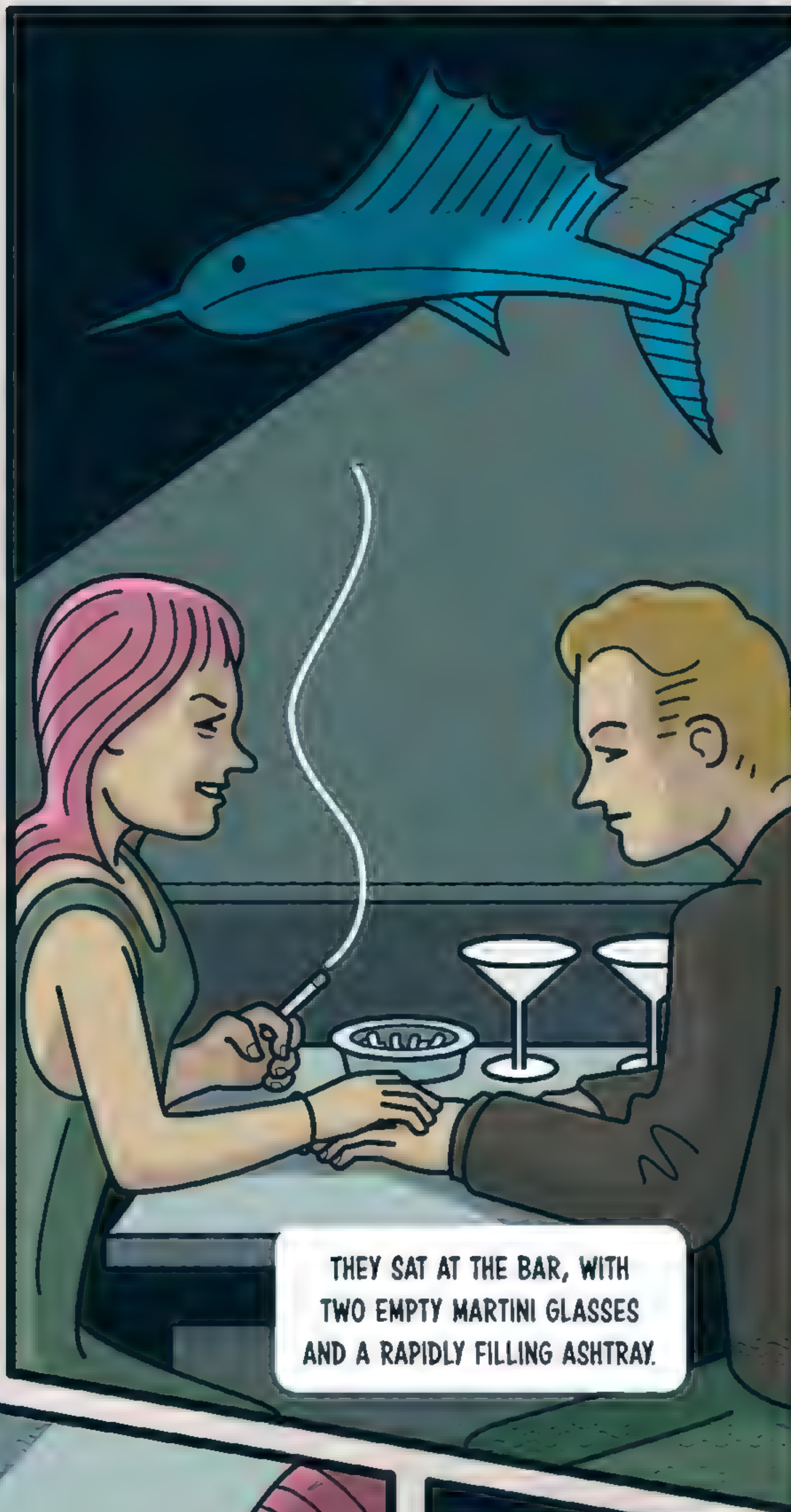






THE DOORMAN  
NODDED AS  
THEY WALKED IN.

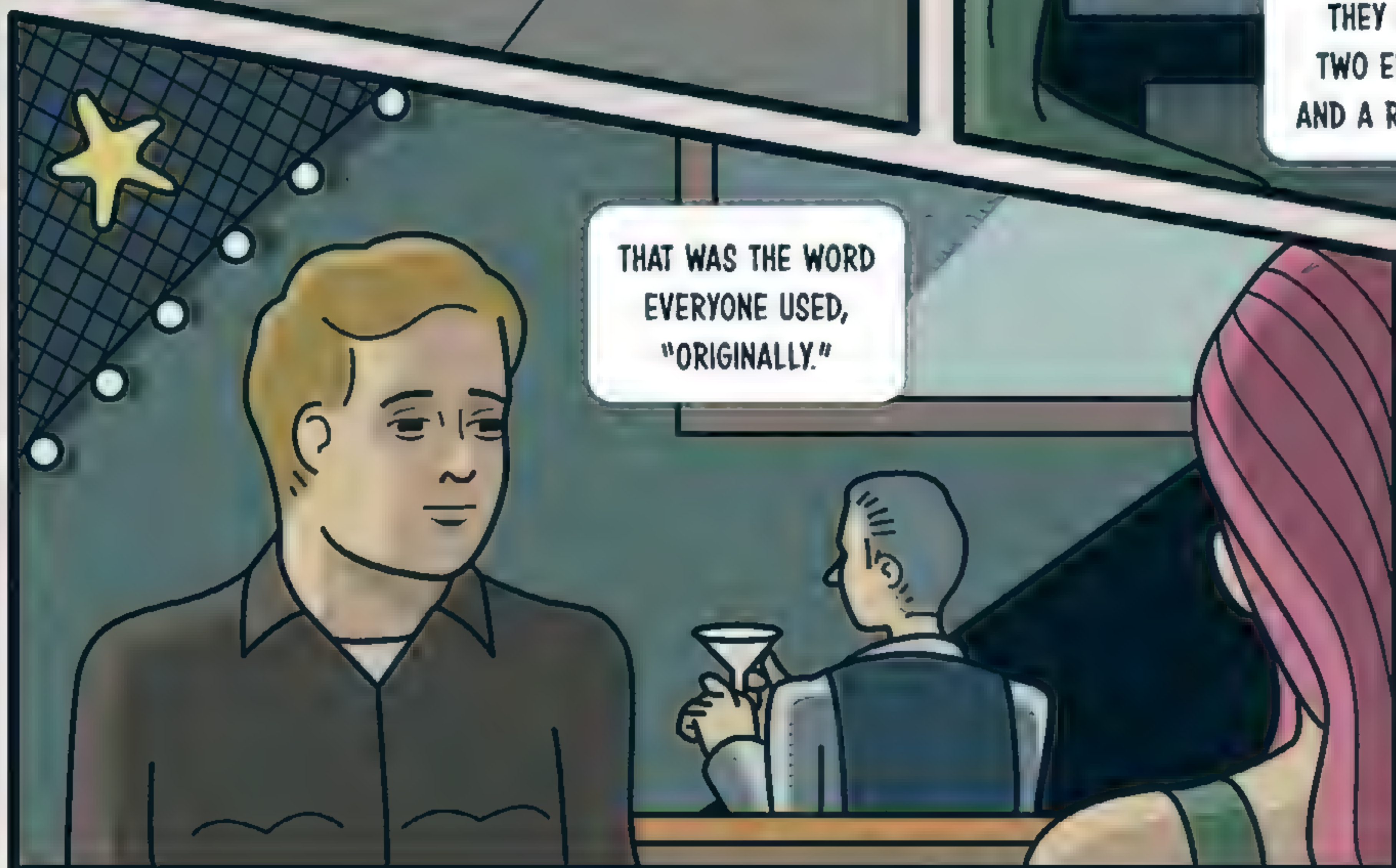
HEY,  
WANDA.



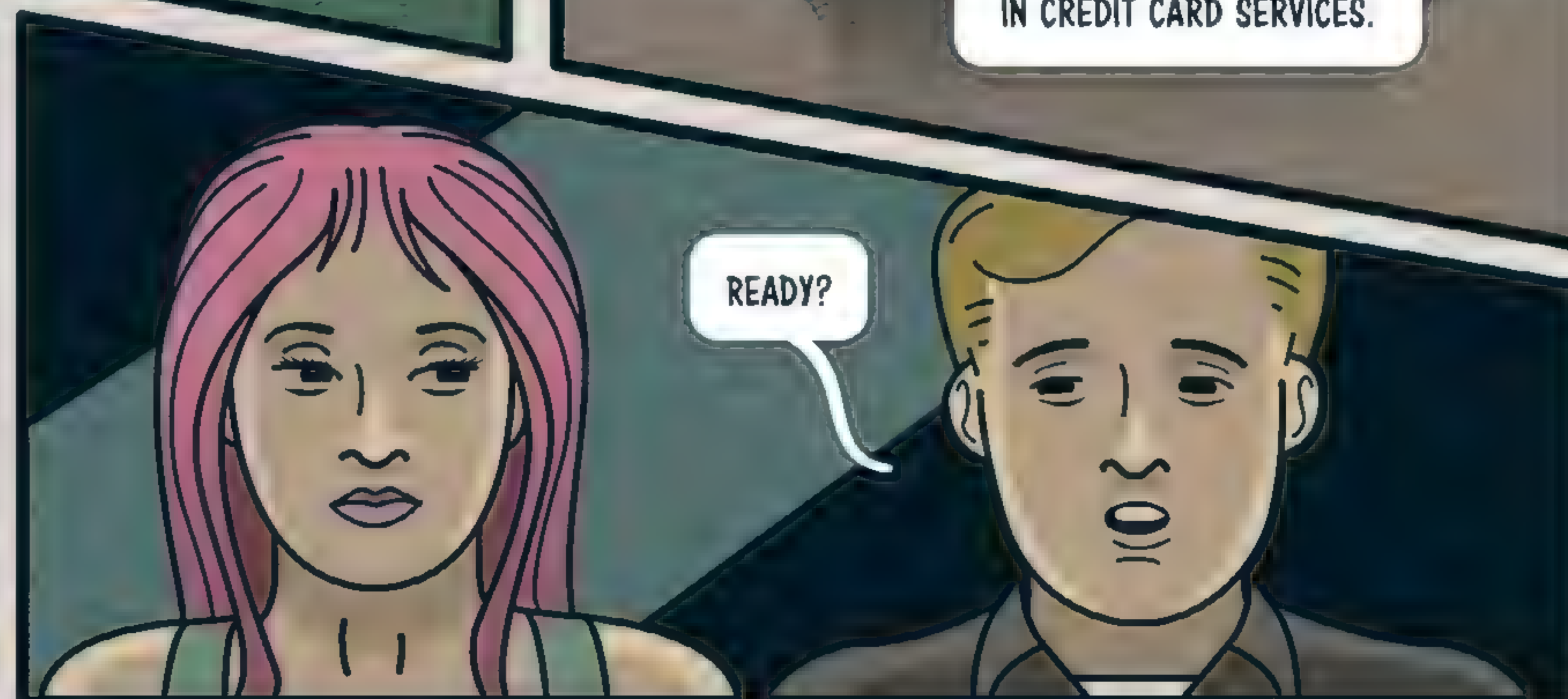
THEY SAT AT THE BAR, WITH  
TWO EMPTY MARTINI GLASSES  
AND A RAPIDLY FILLING ASHTRAY.



EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE  
THE BARTENDER EMPTIED  
THE ASHTRAY AND SET OUT  
FRESH GLASSES.



THAT WAS THE WORD  
EVERYONE USED,  
"ORIGINALLY."



READY?





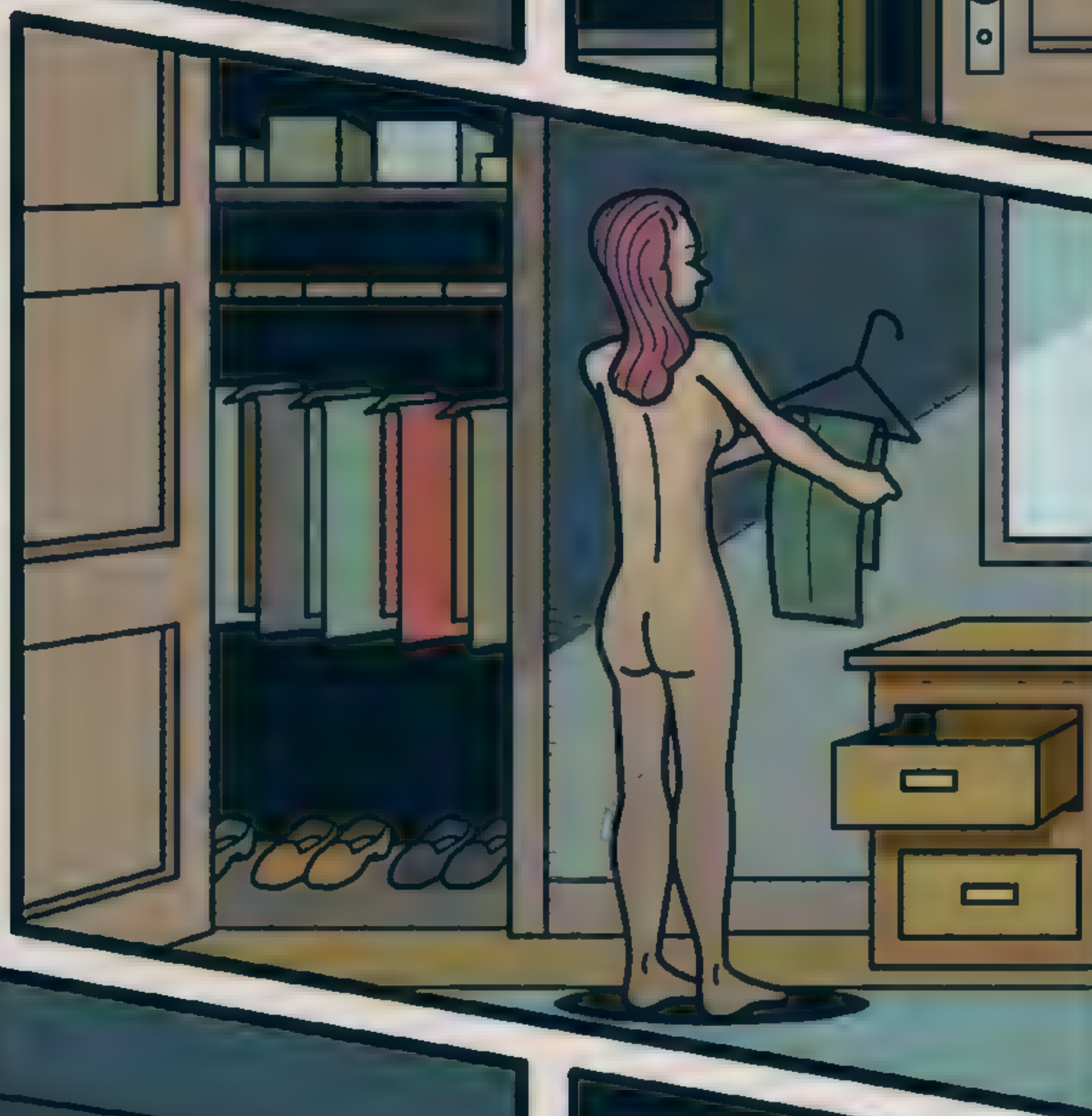
THEY LEFT, AND SHE DROVE  
THEM BACK TO HER PLACE.



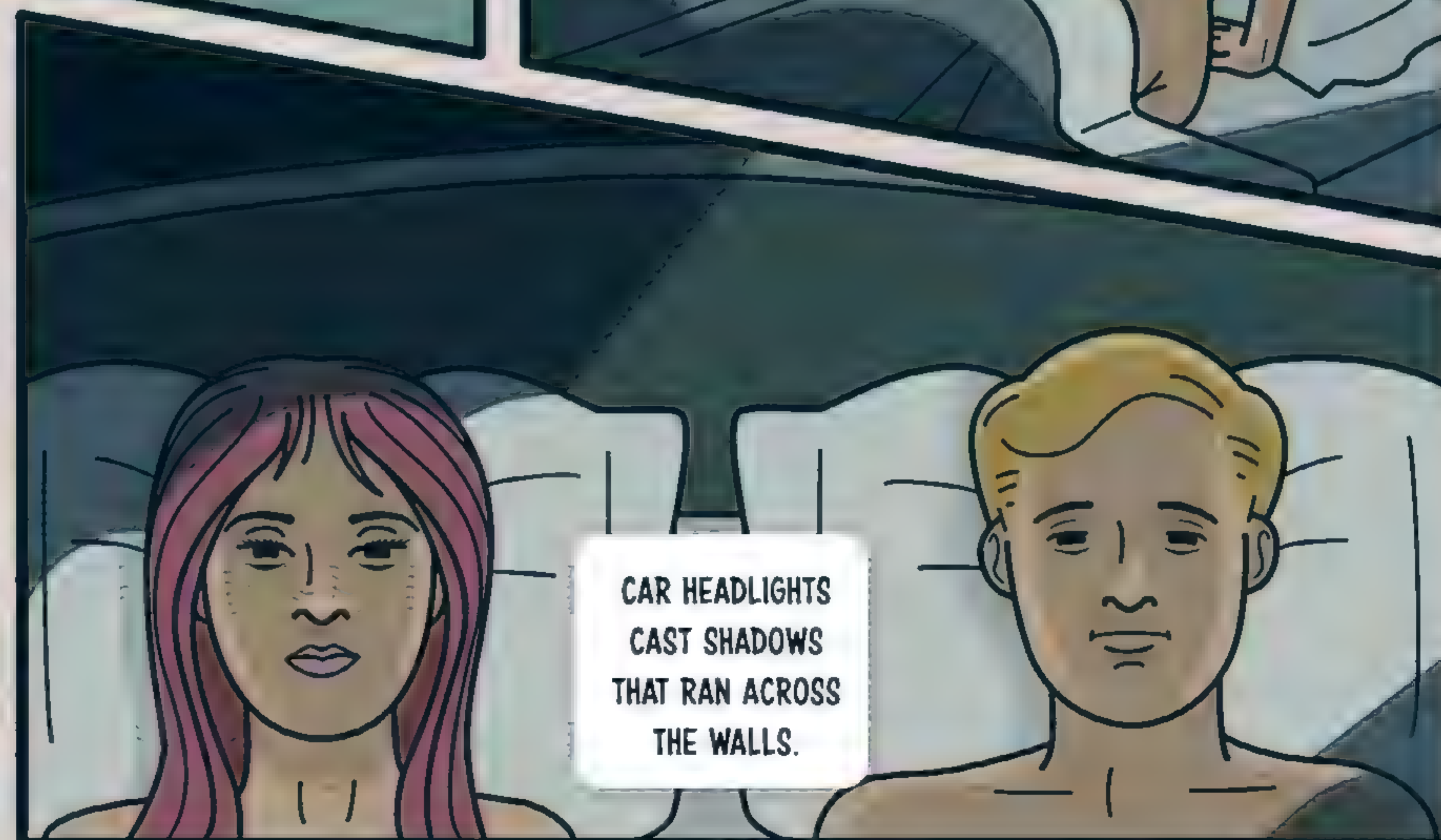
A SMALL  
GARDEN-COURT  
APARTMENT.



THEY SAT THERE,  
TALKING AND SMOKING  
UNTIL WANDA GOT UP.

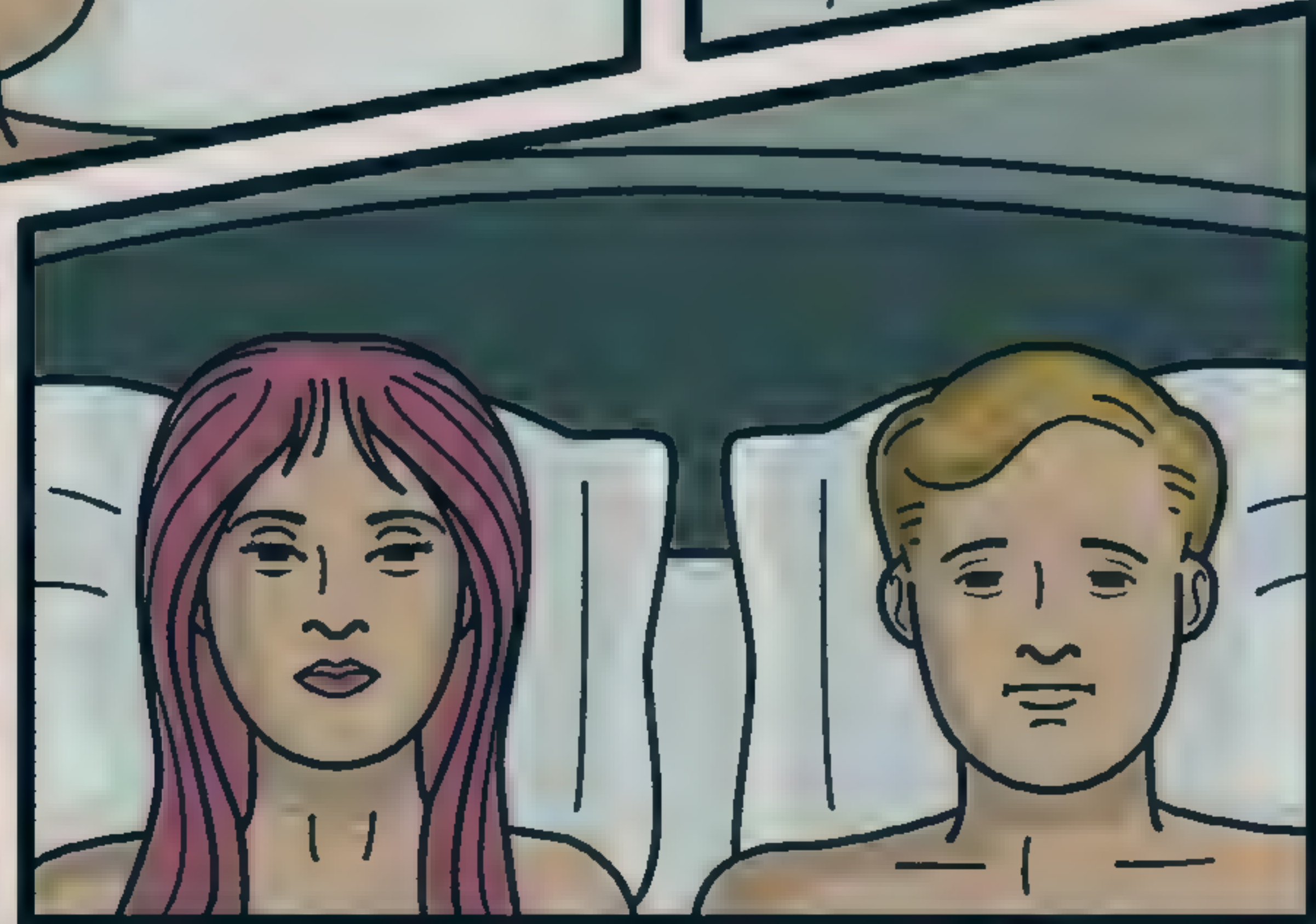
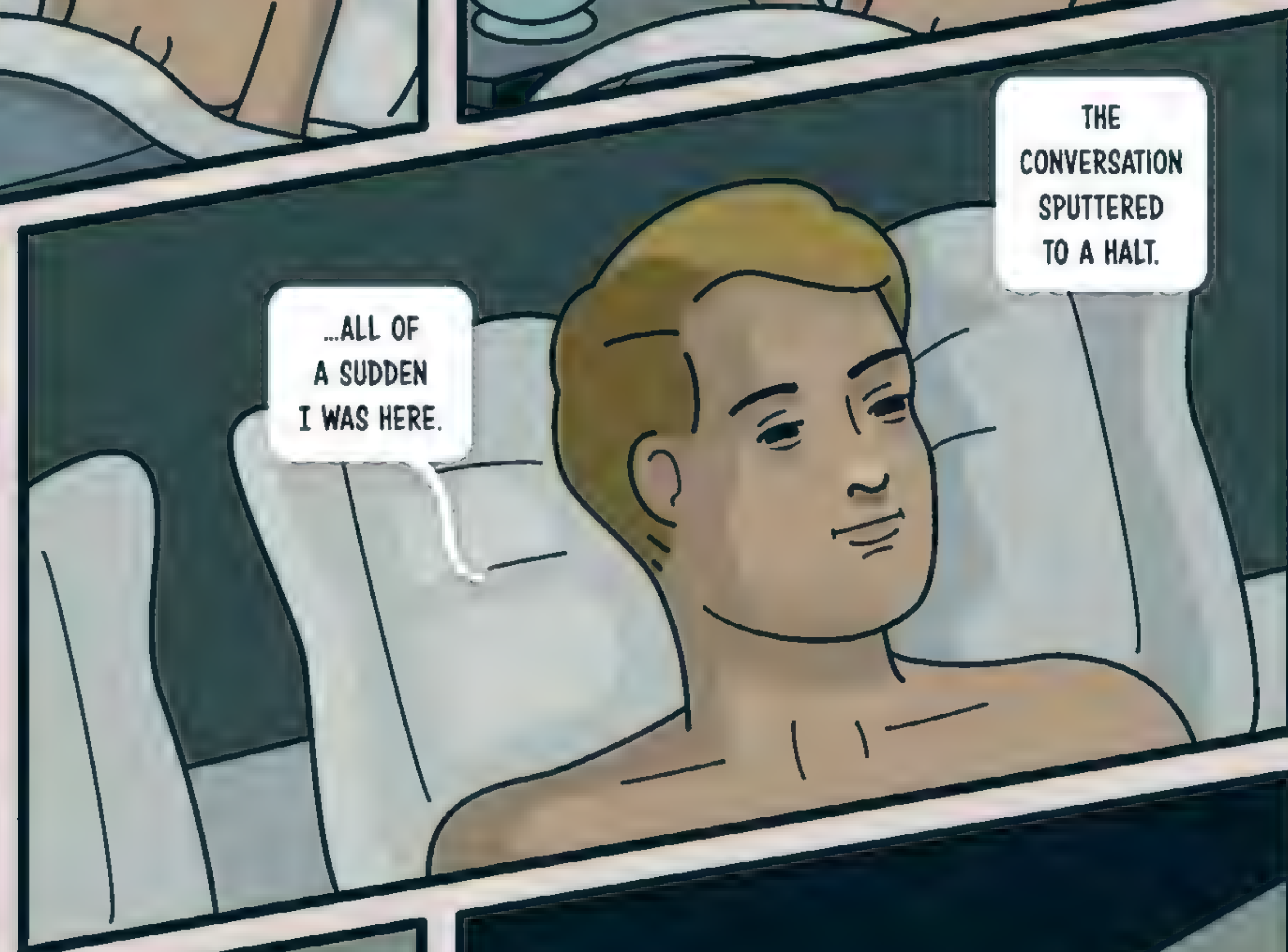
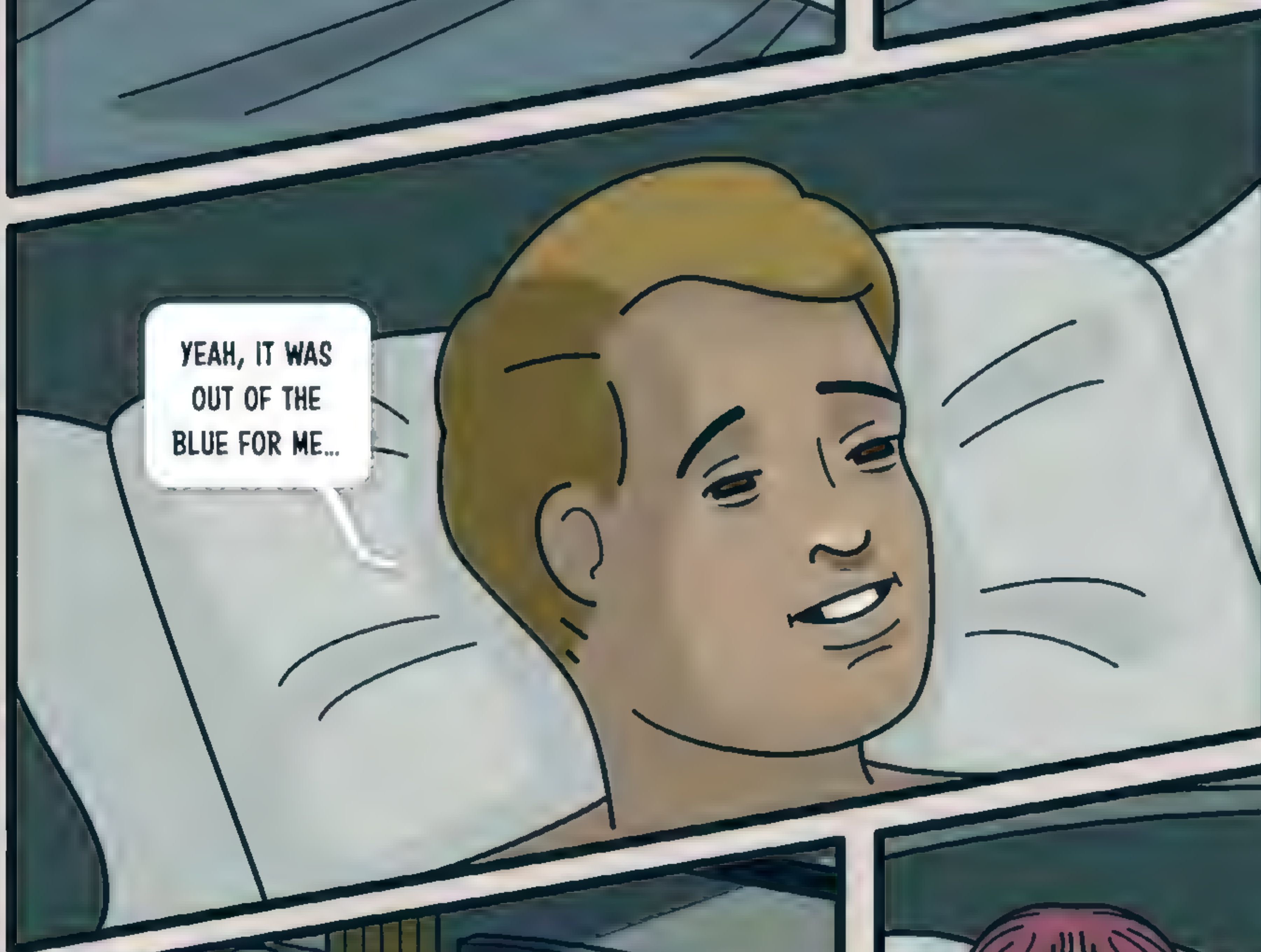
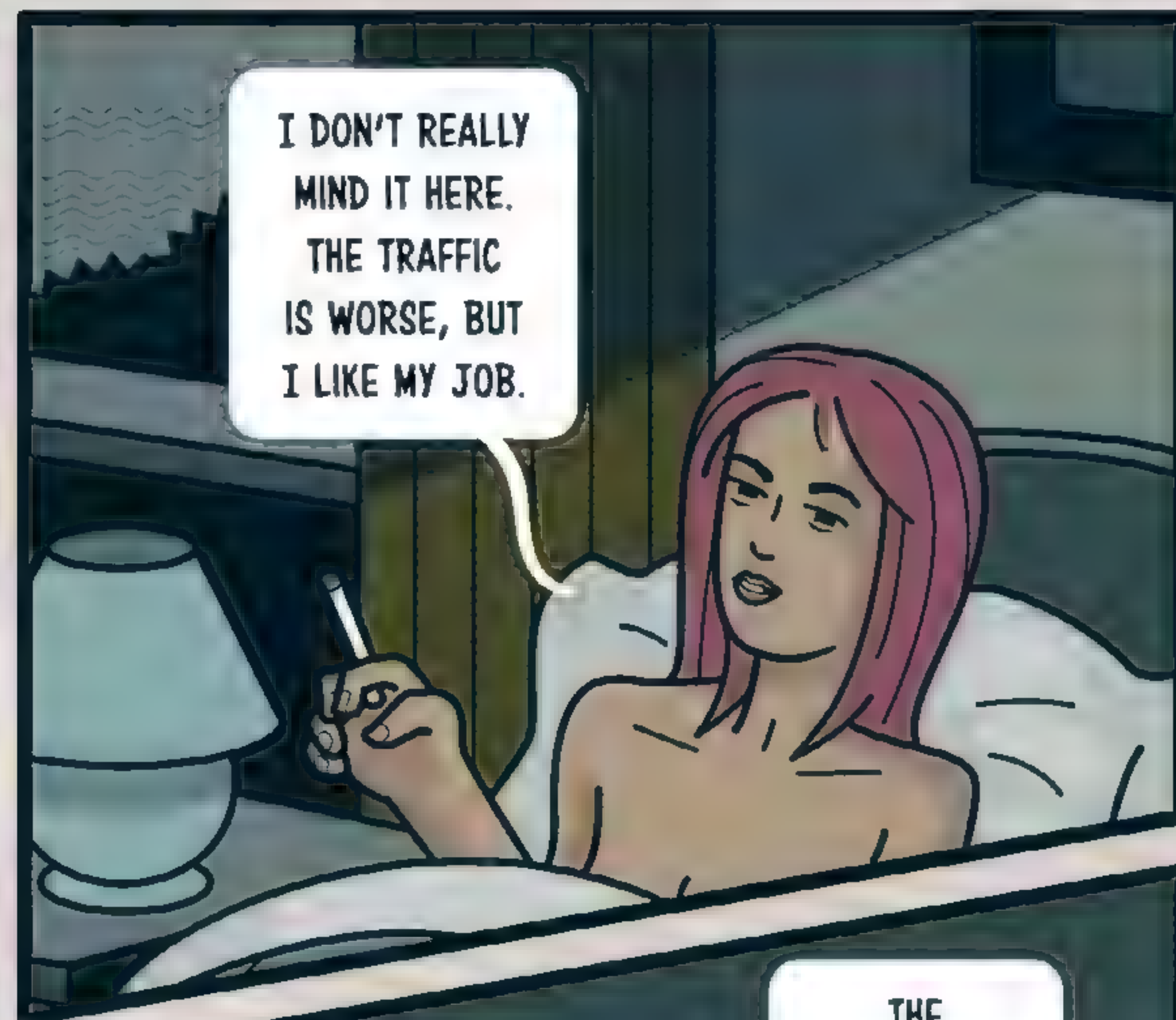


THEY FUMBLING AROUND  
FOR A WHILE, BUT NOTHING  
REALLY HAPPENED.

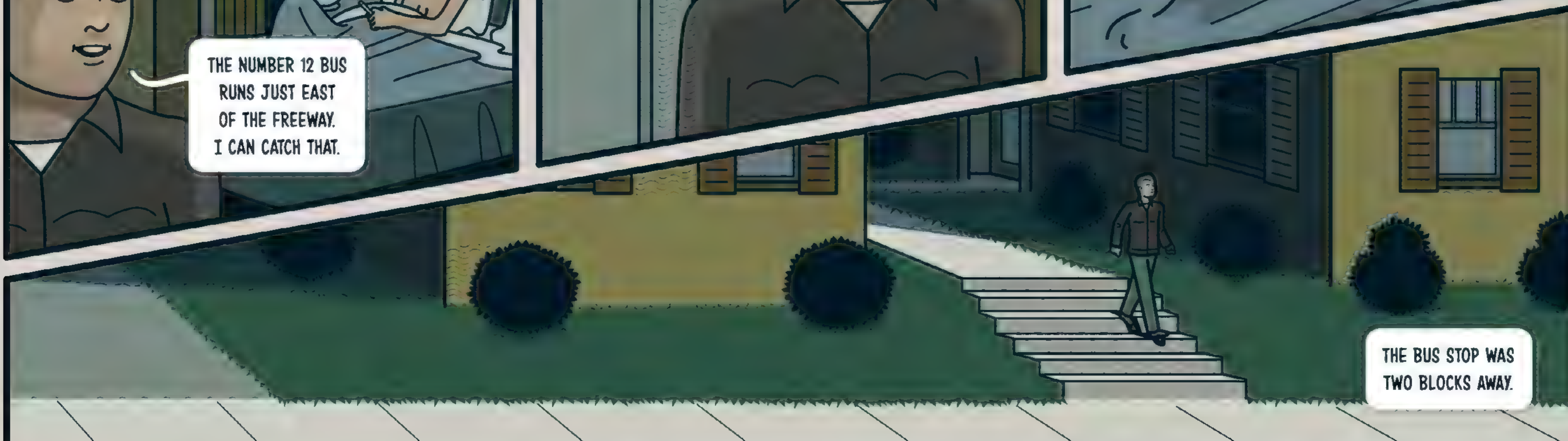
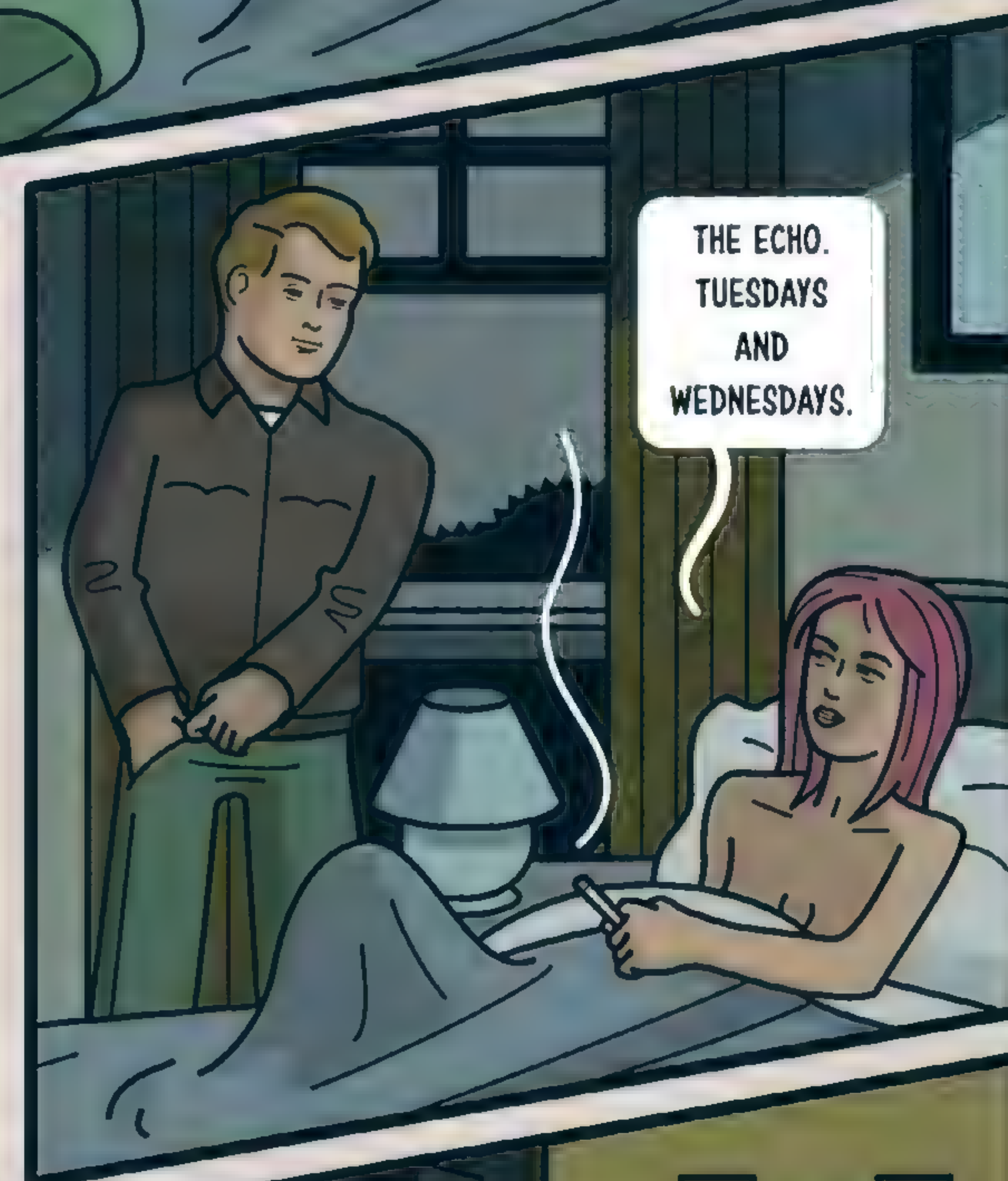
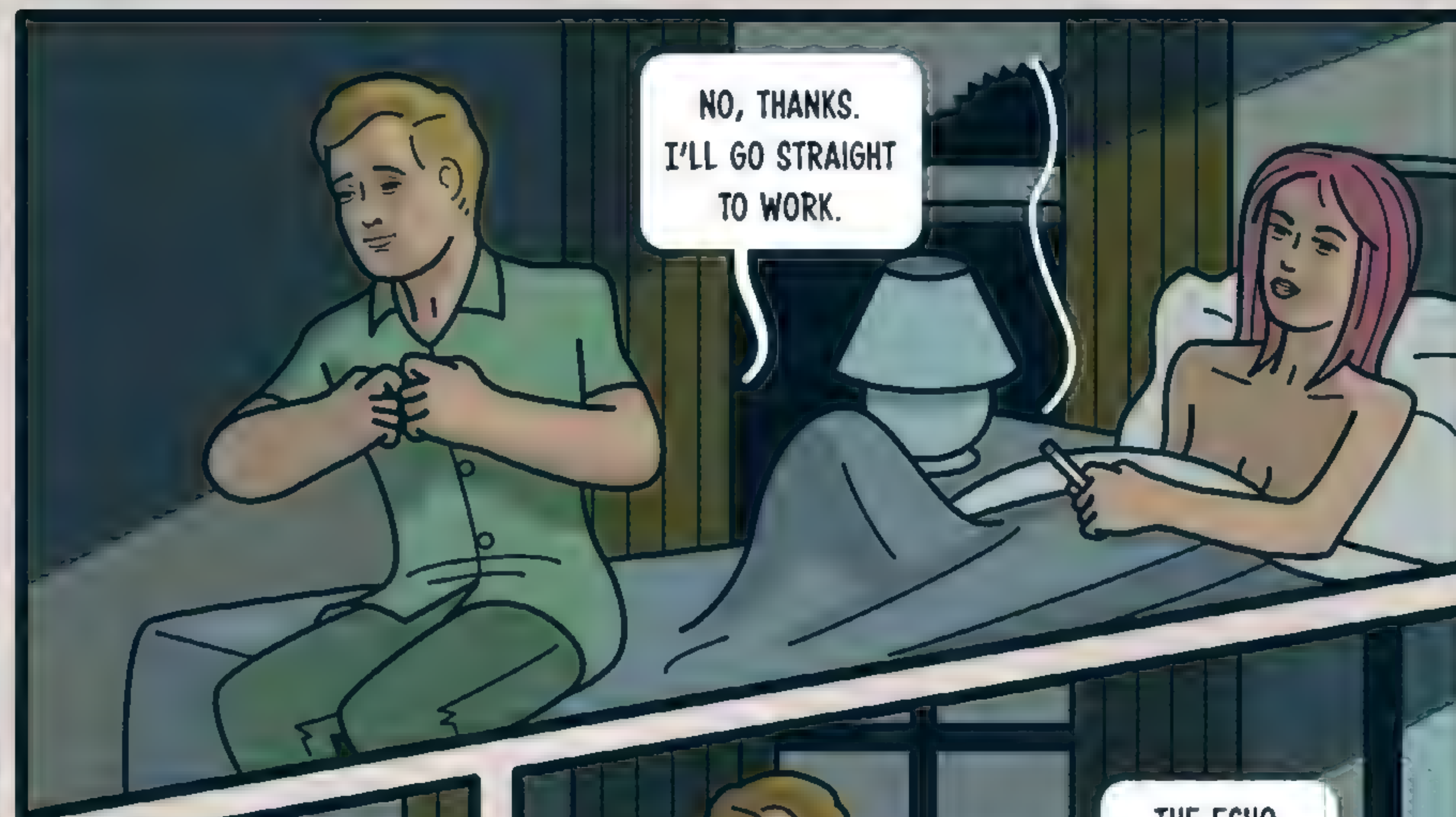
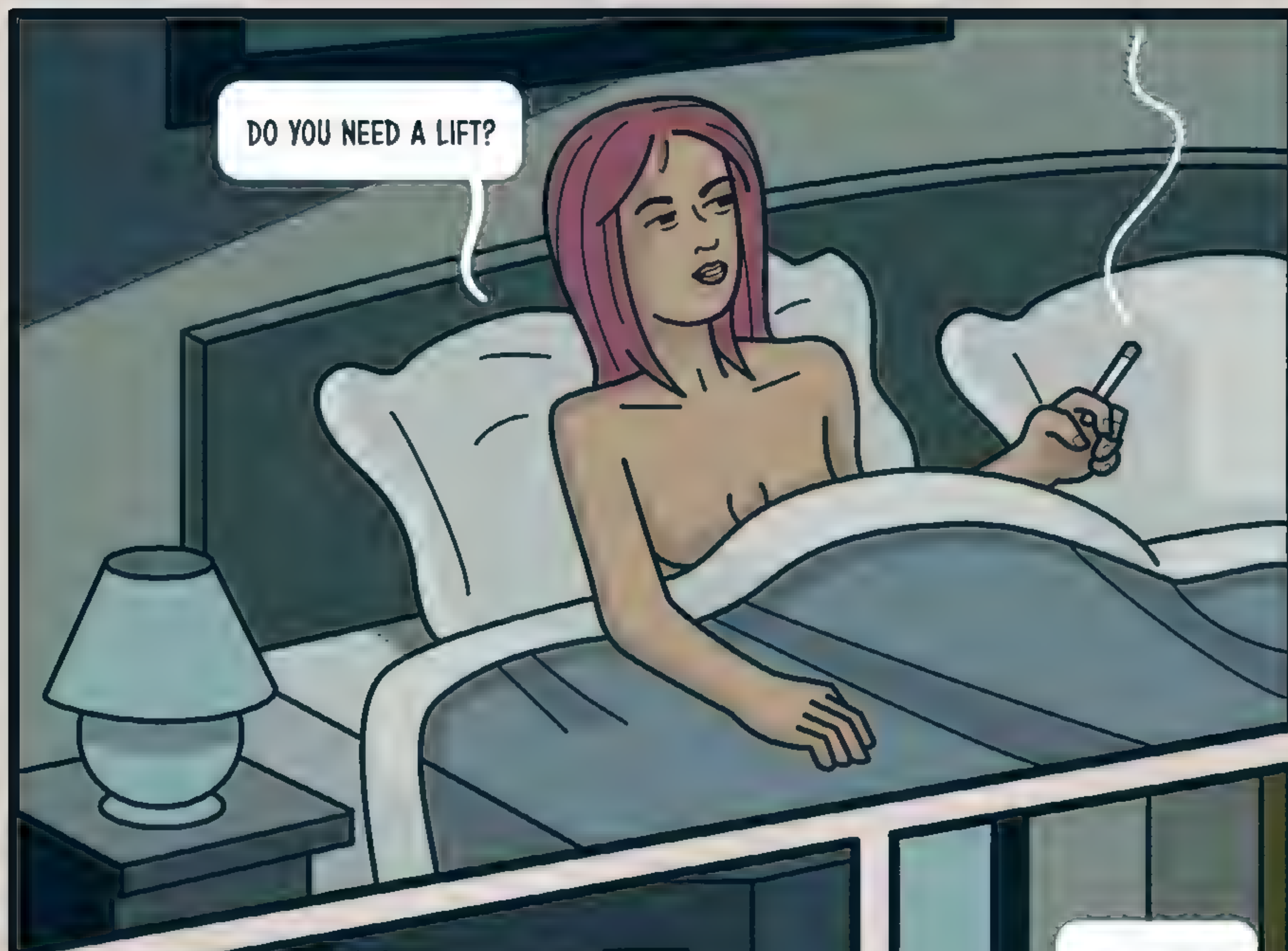


CAR HEADLIGHTS  
CAST SHADOWS  
THAT RAN ACROSS  
THE WALLS.

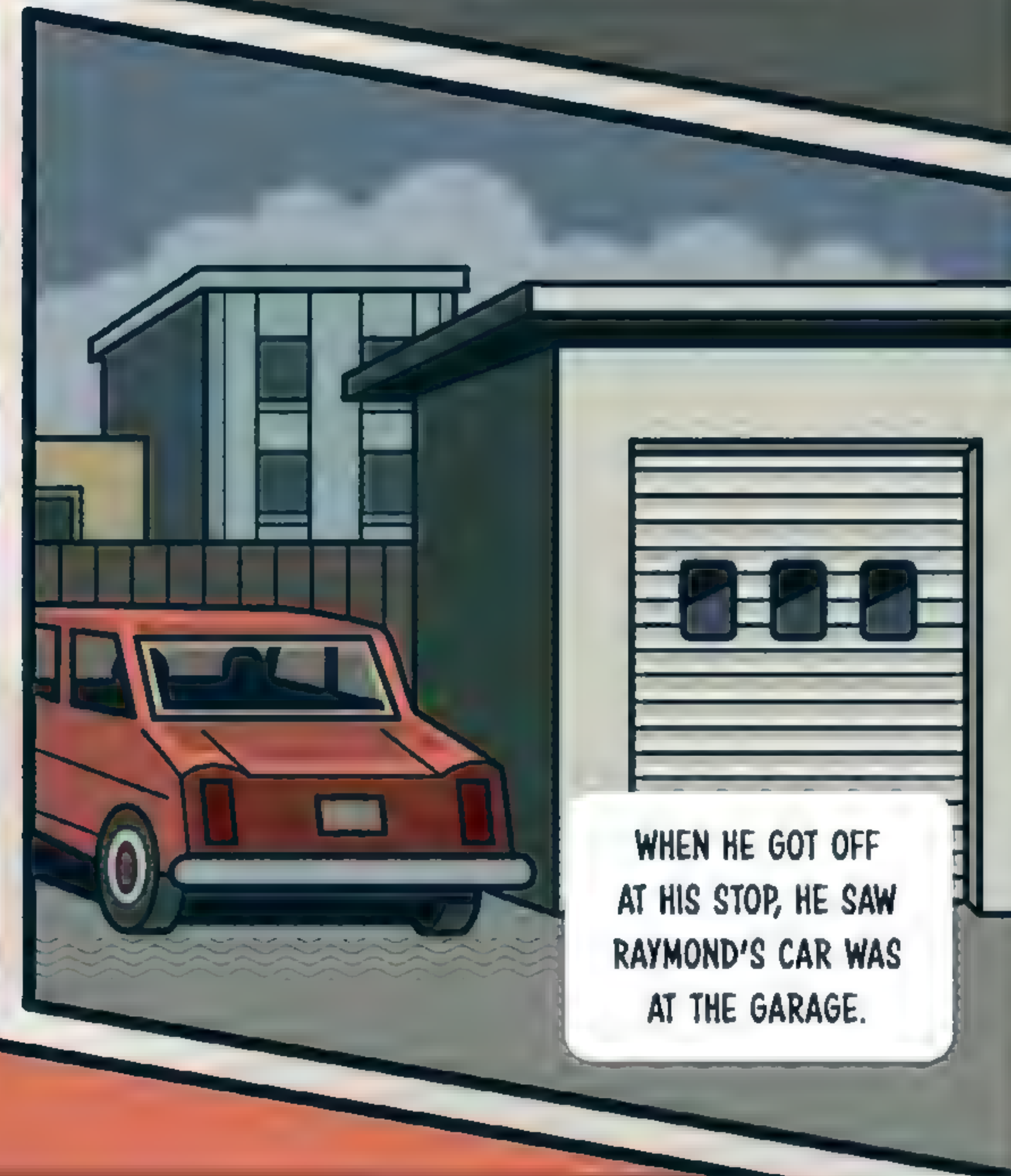
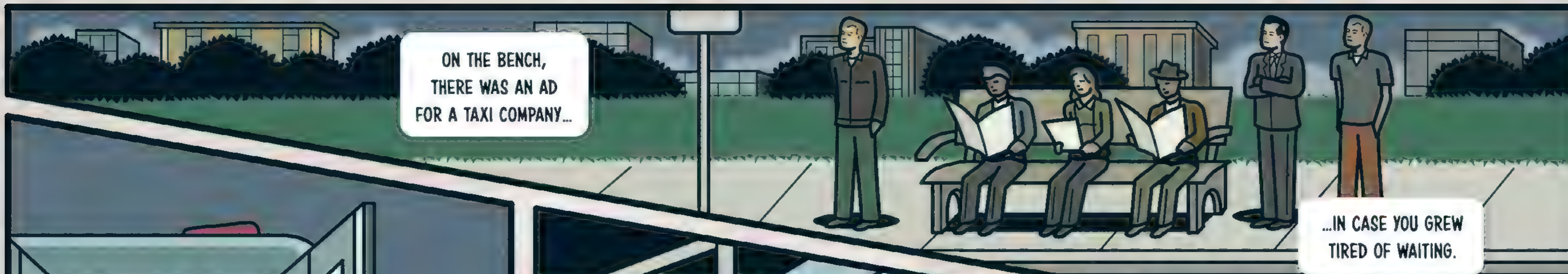












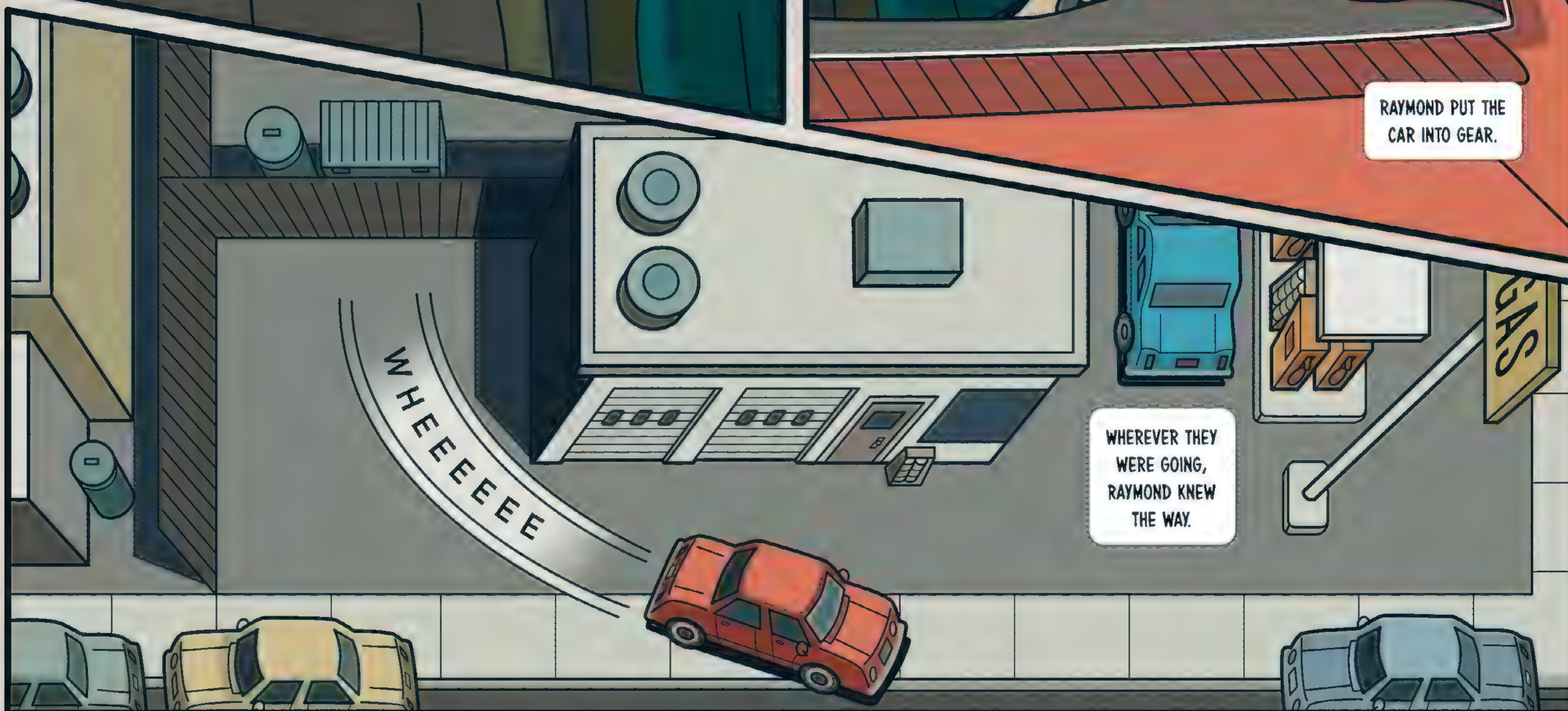




SO...JIMMY, YOU  
FINALLY TURNED UP  
LIKE A BAD PENNY.



RAYMOND PUT THE  
CAR INTO GEAR.



WHEREVER THEY  
WERE GOING,  
RAYMOND KNEW  
THE WAY.





EDDIE BROKE  
THE SILENCE.

NOBODY CAN  
REMEMBER  
THE MOMENT  
OF THEIR  
OWN DEATHS...



...BUT IN YOUR  
PARTICULAR CASE,  
JIM, WE CAN SHED  
A LITTLE LIGHT.



THE LAST THING  
I REMEMBER IS  
EMPTYING THE TRASH  
INTO THE DUMPSTER  
BEHIND THE CLUB.



HEH. HAVING YOU TAKE OUT THE TRASH  
WAS MY IDEA. YOU NEVER SAW IT  
COMING, JIMBO. I CLIPPED YOU IN THE  
BACK OF THE HEAD WHEN YOU OPENED  
THE DUMPSTER LID.











# CHAPTER

# 4

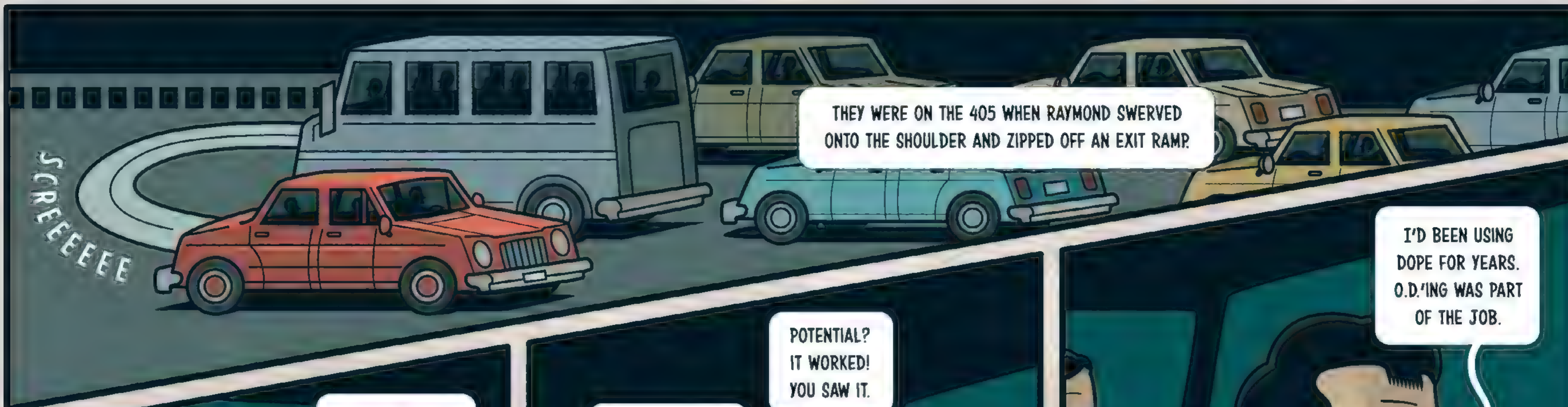
IT WAS TORMENT WAITING FOR 9 P.M.  
WAITING TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY WANTED HIM FOR.

THE RADIO WAS MOSTLY STATIC  
ON THE CAB RIDE HOME.  
ANDY WILLIAMS SINGING  
"MOON RIVER" STRUGGLED  
TO GET THROUGH THE SNOW.

HE DID SOME PUZZLES  
AND SMOKED UNTIL 8:30.  
THEN IT WAS TIME TO LEAVE.

JIM BOUGHT CIGARETTES  
FROM THE NEWSSTAND.  
WHEN HE TURNED AROUND,  
RAYMOND'S DODGE WAS  
IDLING AT THE CURB.





THEY WERE ON THE 405 WHEN RAYMOND SWERVED ONTO THE SHOULDER AND ZIPPED OFF AN EXIT RAMP.



RAYMOND HAS MADE A POTENTIAL CONNECTION BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.



GO AHEAD, THEN, RAYMOND. TELL HIM WHAT YOU FOUND.

POTENTIAL? IT WORKED! YOU SAW IT.



I'D BEEN USING DOPE FOR YEARS. O.D.'ING WAS PART OF THE JOB.

RAYMOND HAD SEVERAL NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES BEFORE HE DIED FOR GOOD.

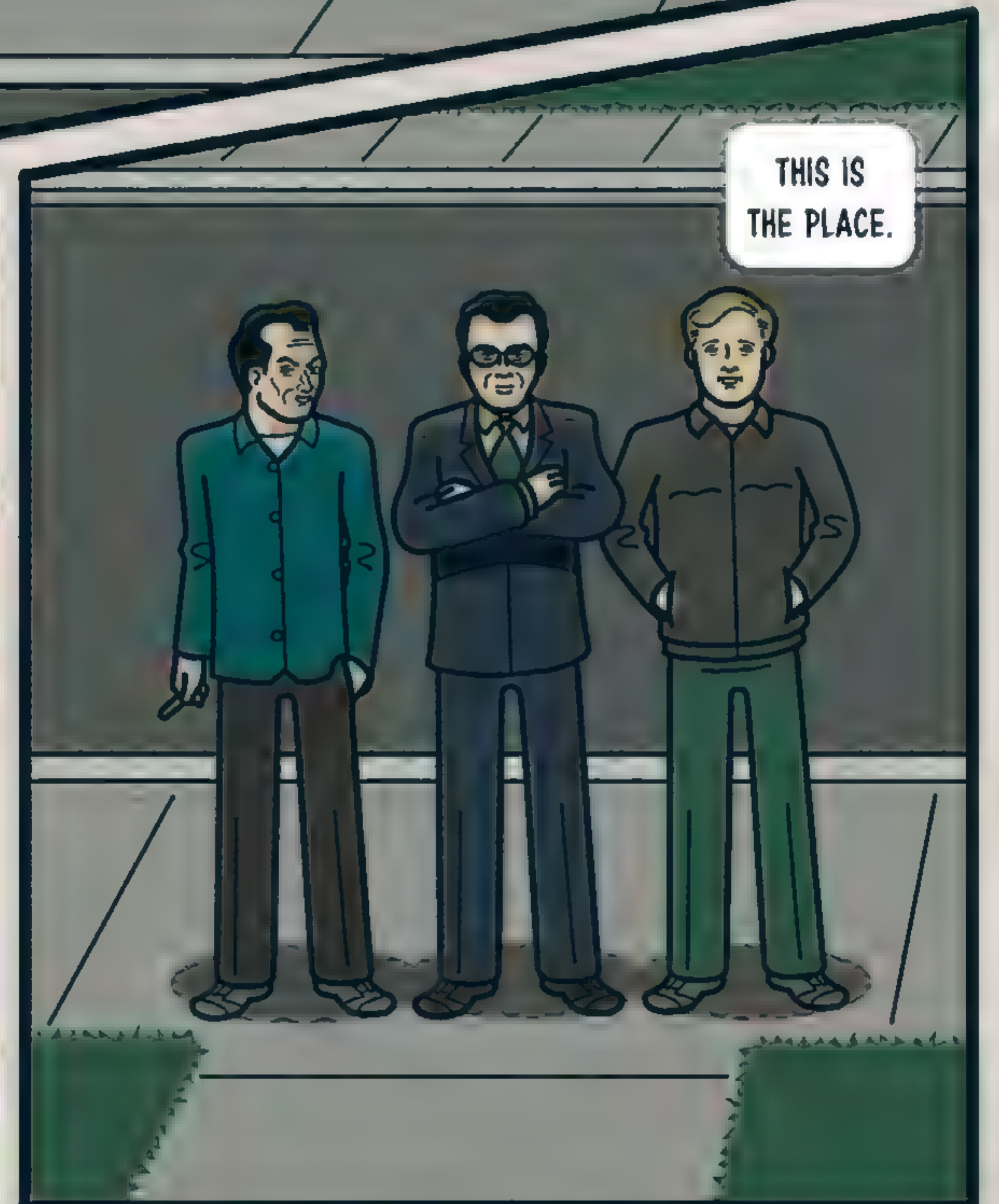
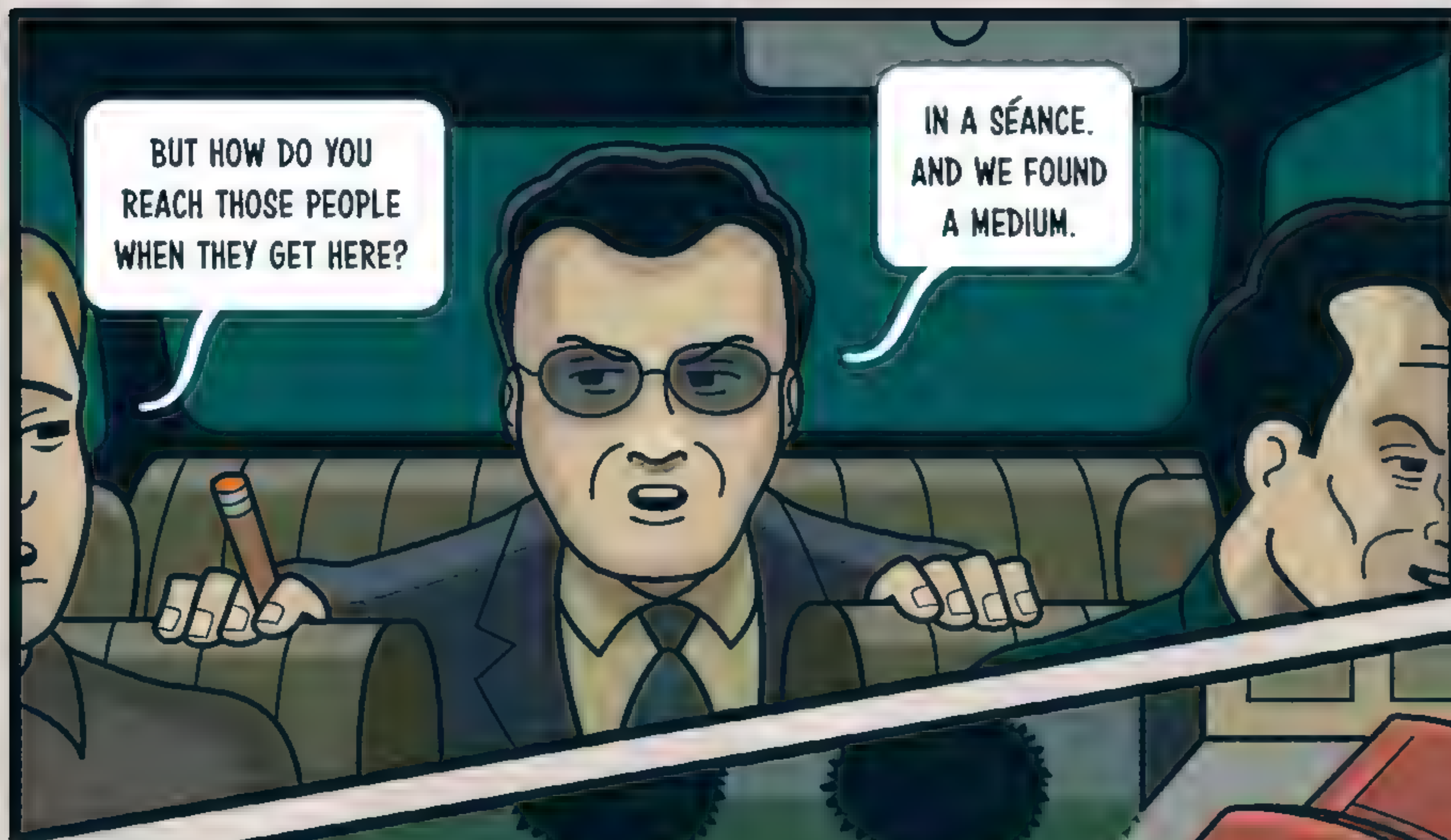


YEAH, ONE TIME I SAW MY MOM AND SISTER ANGELA, BOTH OF WHOM ARE DEAD...AND THEY REMEMBERED IT WHEN I GOT HERE FOR GOOD. YOU SEE...DEATH IS A TWO-WAY STREET.



RAYMOND WAS ONTO SOMETHING. IN A NEAR-DEATH STATE, A LIVING PERSON CAN CROSS OVER AND THEN GO BACK IF THEY'RE REVIVED IN TIME.









EDDIE  
RAPPED  
LIGHTLY ON  
THE DOOR.



SHE STARED  
AT JIM.

HE WASN'T  
HERE  
LAST TIME.



I TOLD YOU,  
NOBODY COMES  
THAT I HAVEN'T  
VETTED.



SURE, SURE, LINDA. WE KNEW  
JIM FROM BEFORE. I VOUCH  
FOR HIM. HE'S OKAY.



WELL, YOU KNOW  
HOW DANGEROUS  
THIS IS. IF WE'RE  
CAUGHT DOING  
A SÉANCE...



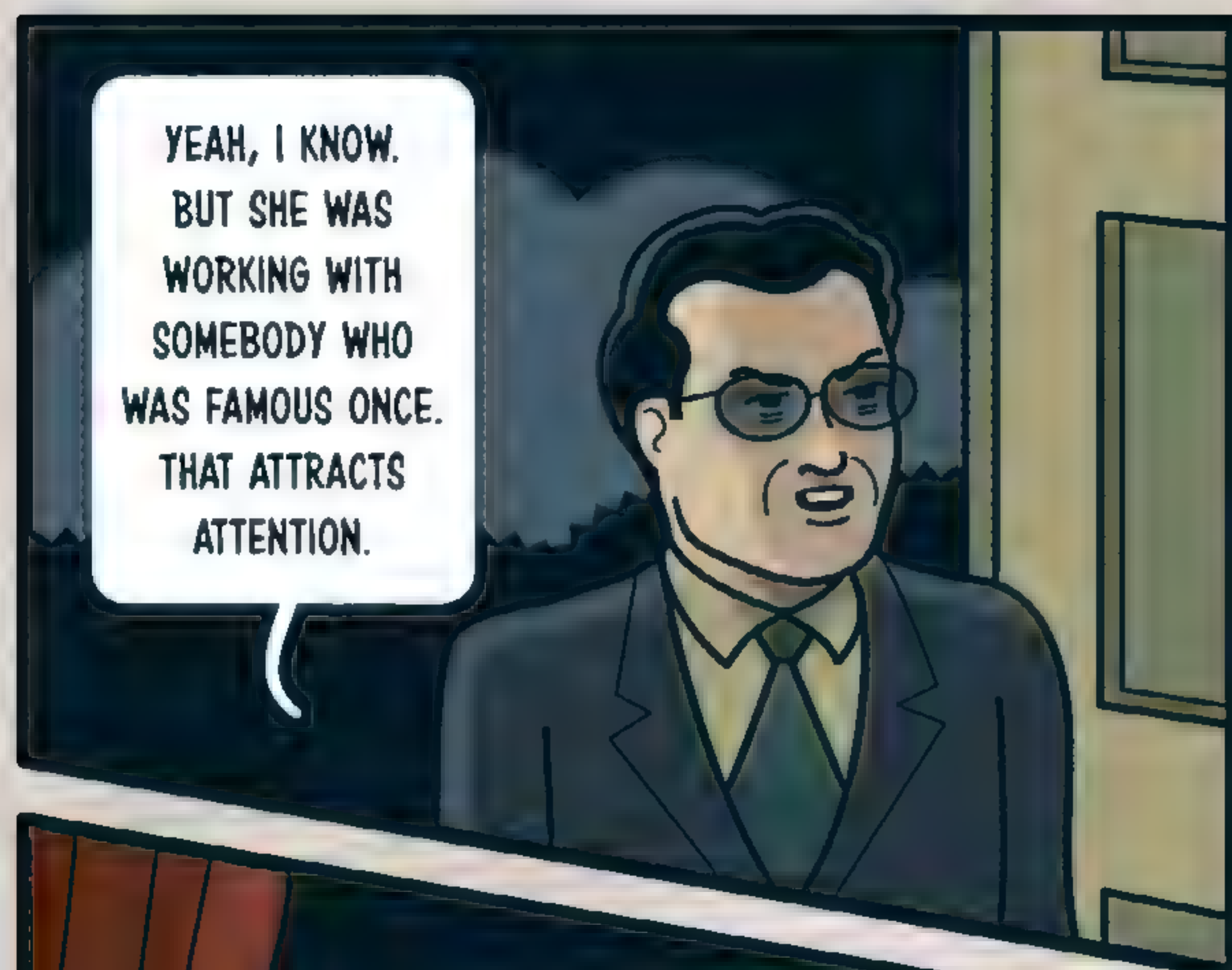
THIS IS IMPORTANT.  
REAL IMPORTANT.

IT BETTER BE.  
THEY GOT CARLA  
LAST WEEK.



SHE USHERED  
THEM INTO  
THE DARK  
HOUSE.









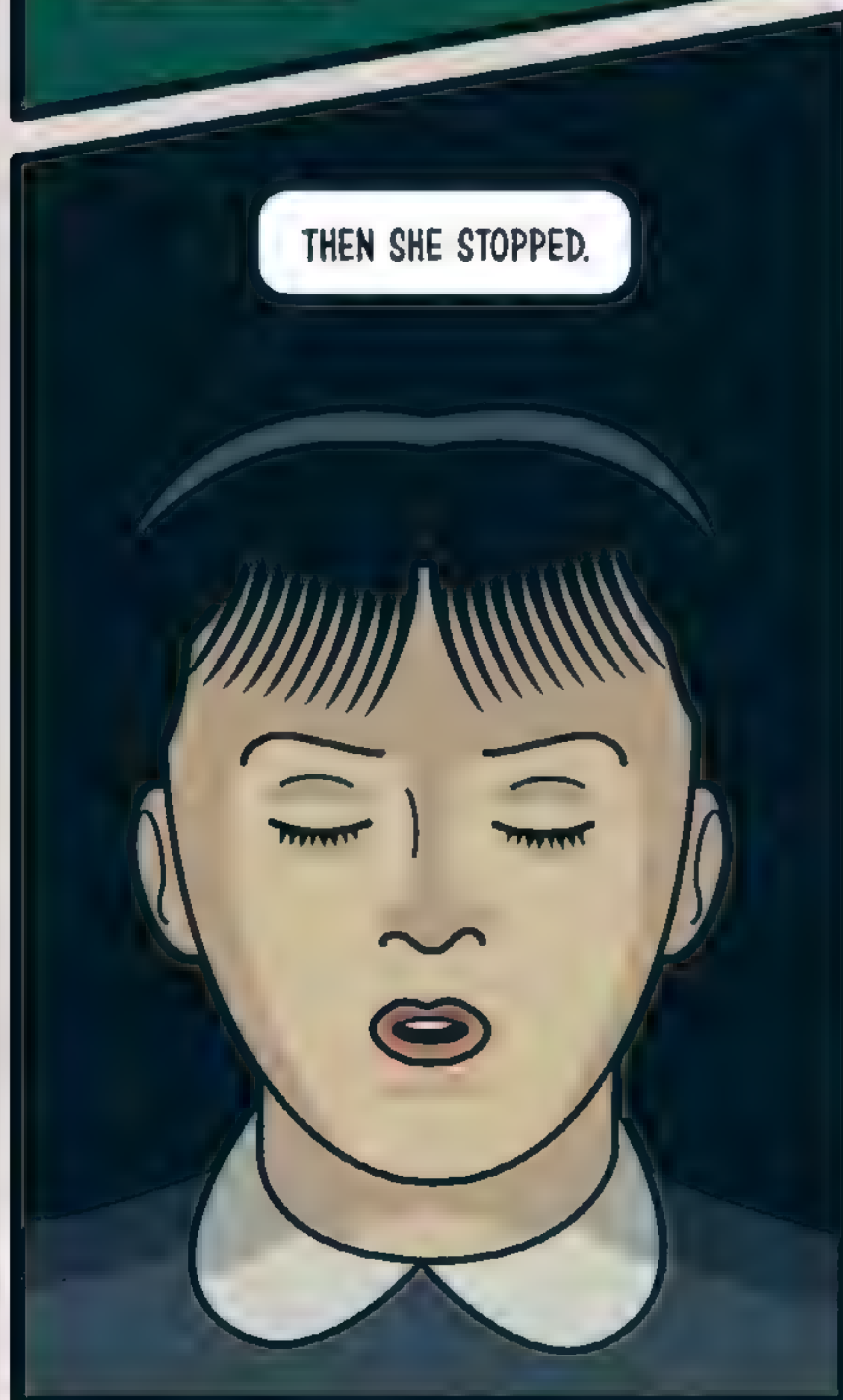
LINDA BOWED  
HER HEAD  
AND BEGAN  
TO TALK IN  
A LOW VOICE.



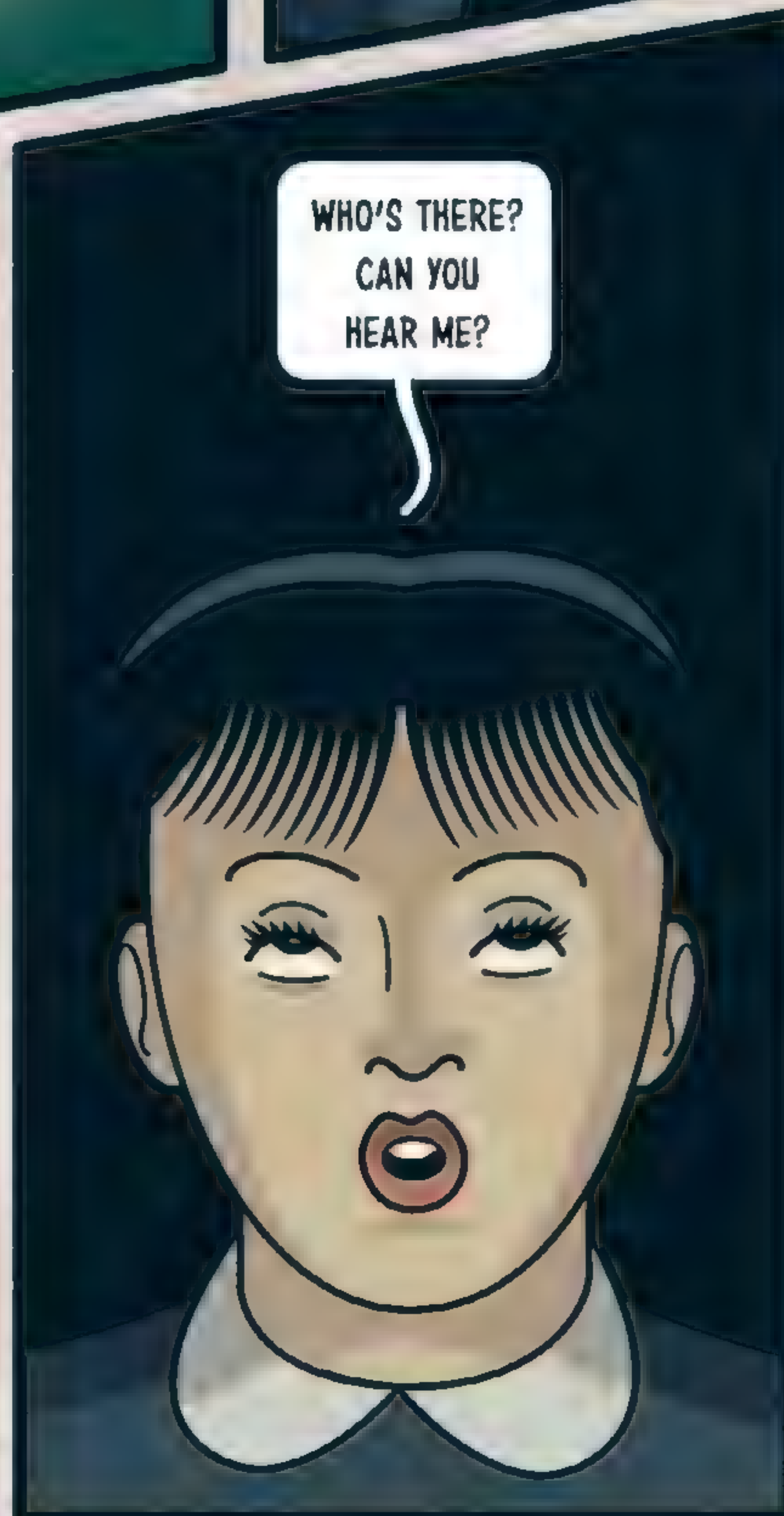
IT SOUNDED  
TO JIM  
LIKE SHE  
WAS SPEAKING  
IN TONGUES.



HER VOICE  
ROSE AND  
FELL IN A  
SOOTHING  
RHYTHM.



THEN SHE STOPPED.



WHO'S THERE?  
CAN YOU  
HEAR ME?



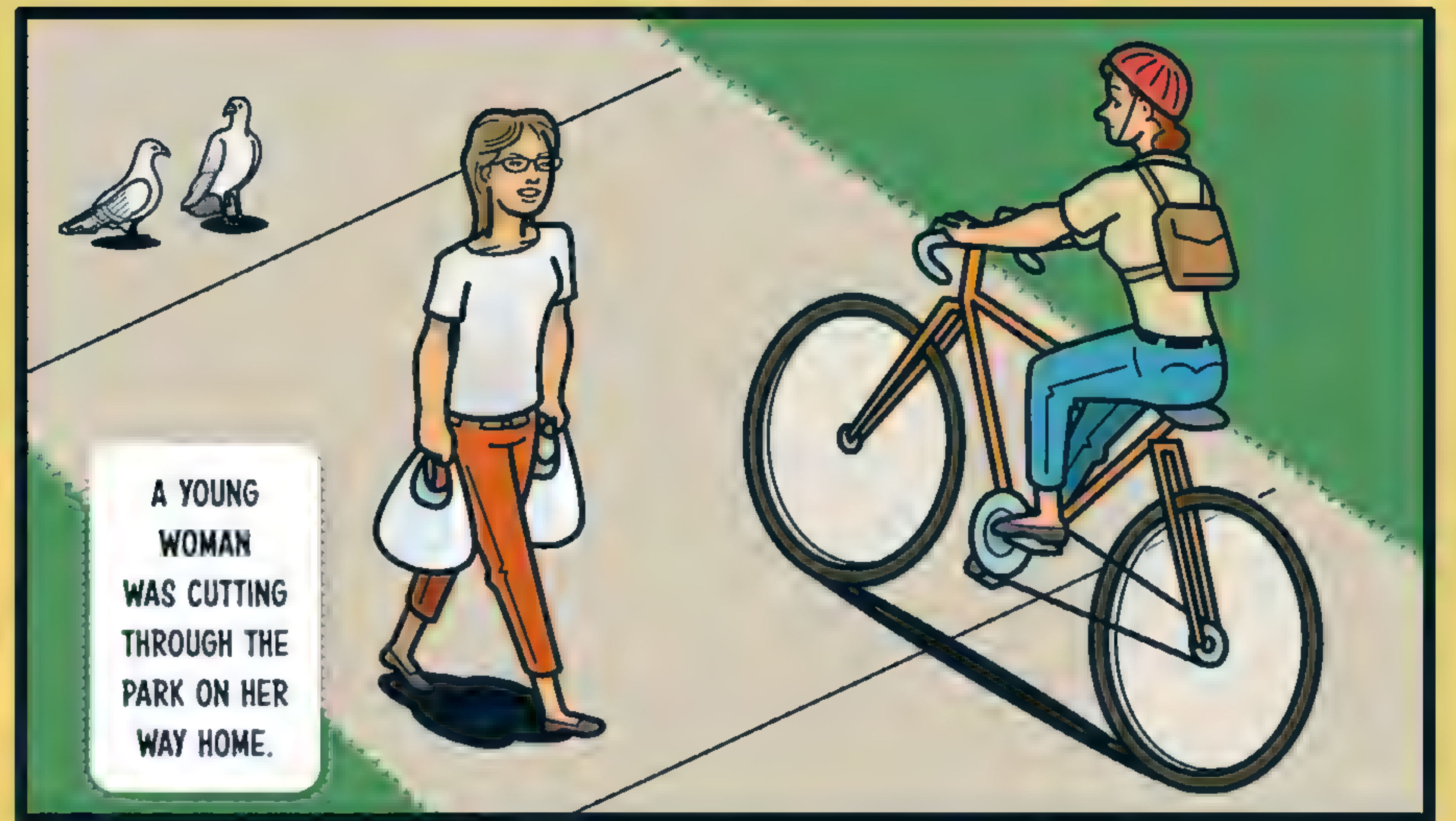
IS HE  
THE ONE?



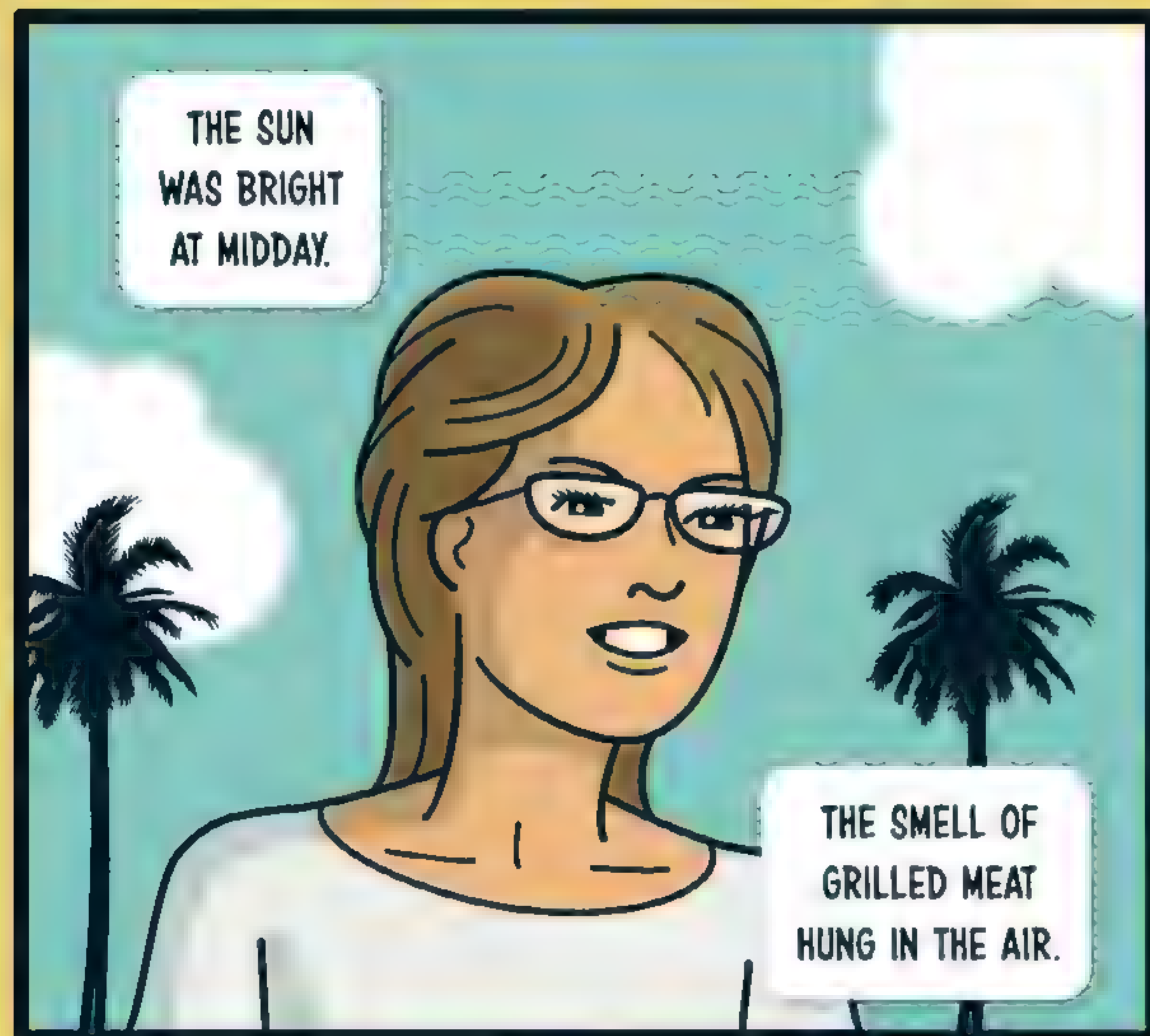
JIM COULD FEEL  
SOMETHING LIKE  
A STATIC CHARGE.

THE ROOM  
WENT DARK.



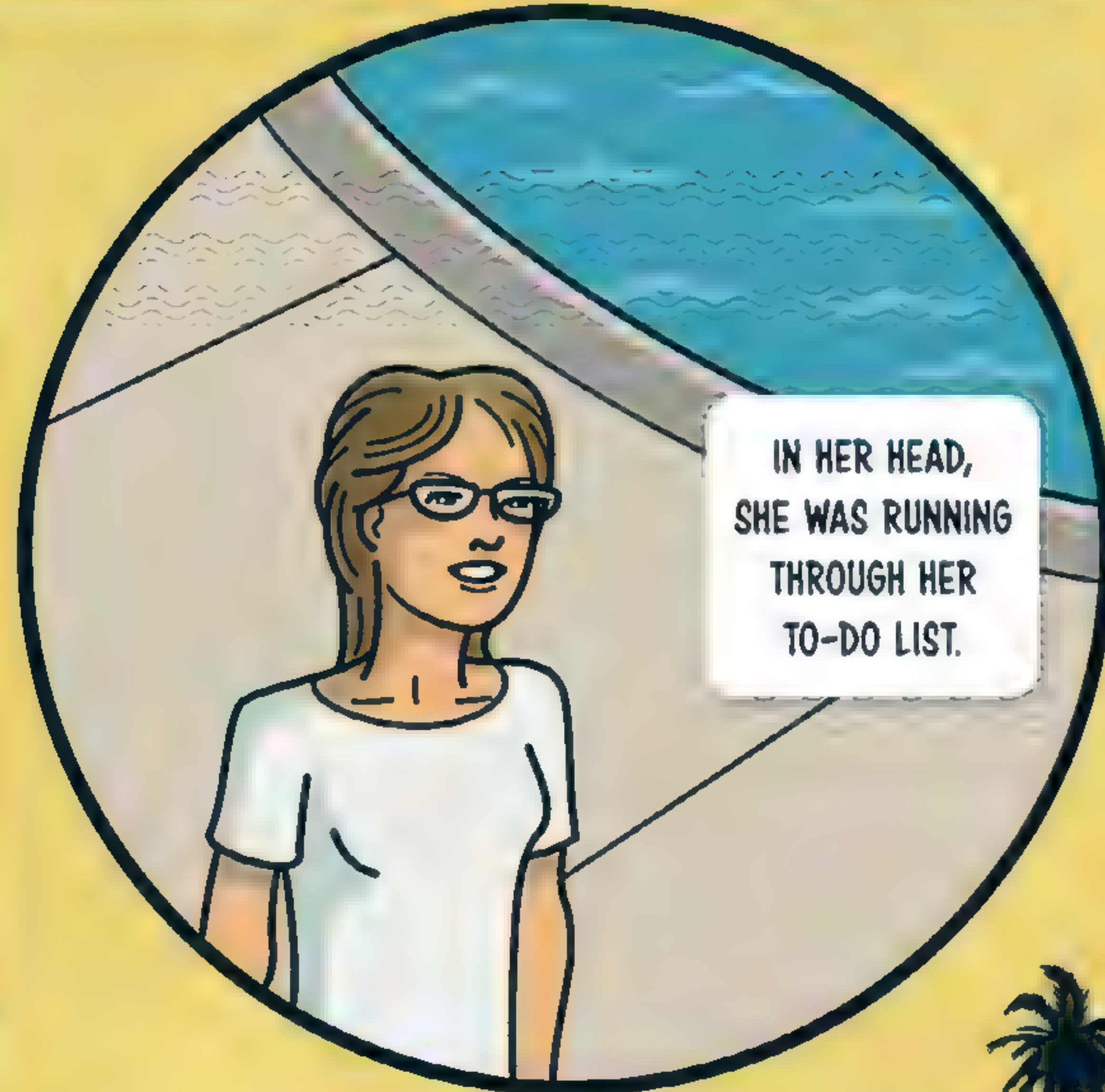


A YOUNG  
WOMAN  
WAS CUTTING  
THROUGH THE  
PARK ON HER  
WAY HOME.



THE SUN  
WAS BRIGHT  
AT MIDDAY.

THE SMELL OF  
GRILLED MEAT  
HUNG IN THE AIR.



IN HER HEAD,  
SHE WAS RUNNING  
THROUGH HER  
TO-DO LIST.



AFTER SHE  
MADE DINNER,  
SHE'D HEAD  
TO THE  
LIBRARY...



...SHE NEEDED TO FINISH  
WRITING A PAPER FOR HER  
GRAD SCHOOL CLASS.





IT WAS WHEN SHE WAS GOING OVER COOKING TIMES FOR BROCCOLI THAT SHE FELT IT.



AN ITCHING, BURNING PAIN ON HER RIGHT FOREARM.



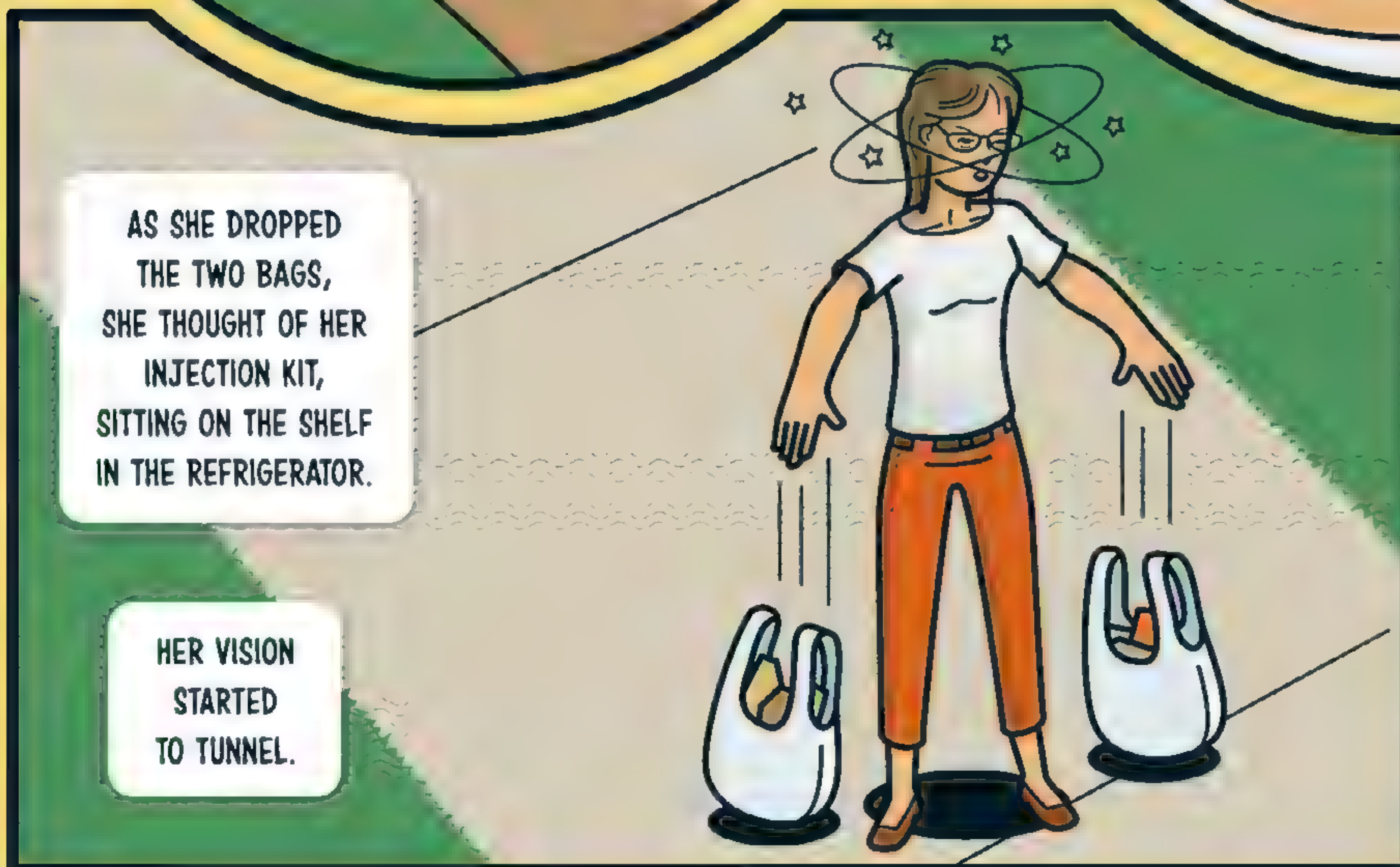
A BEE. ITS STINGER STUCK IN HER SKIN.



NOT MORE THAN A MINUTE LATER, SHE BEGAN TO FEEL A RASP IN HER THROAT.



HER HEAD TILTED SLIGHTLY, AS IF SHE WERE LISTENING TO SOMETHING. HER PACE SLOWED UNTIL SHE WAS STANDING STILL.



AS SHE DROPPED THE TWO BAGS, SHE THOUGHT OF HER INJECTION KIT, SITTING ON THE SHELF IN THE REFRIGERATOR.

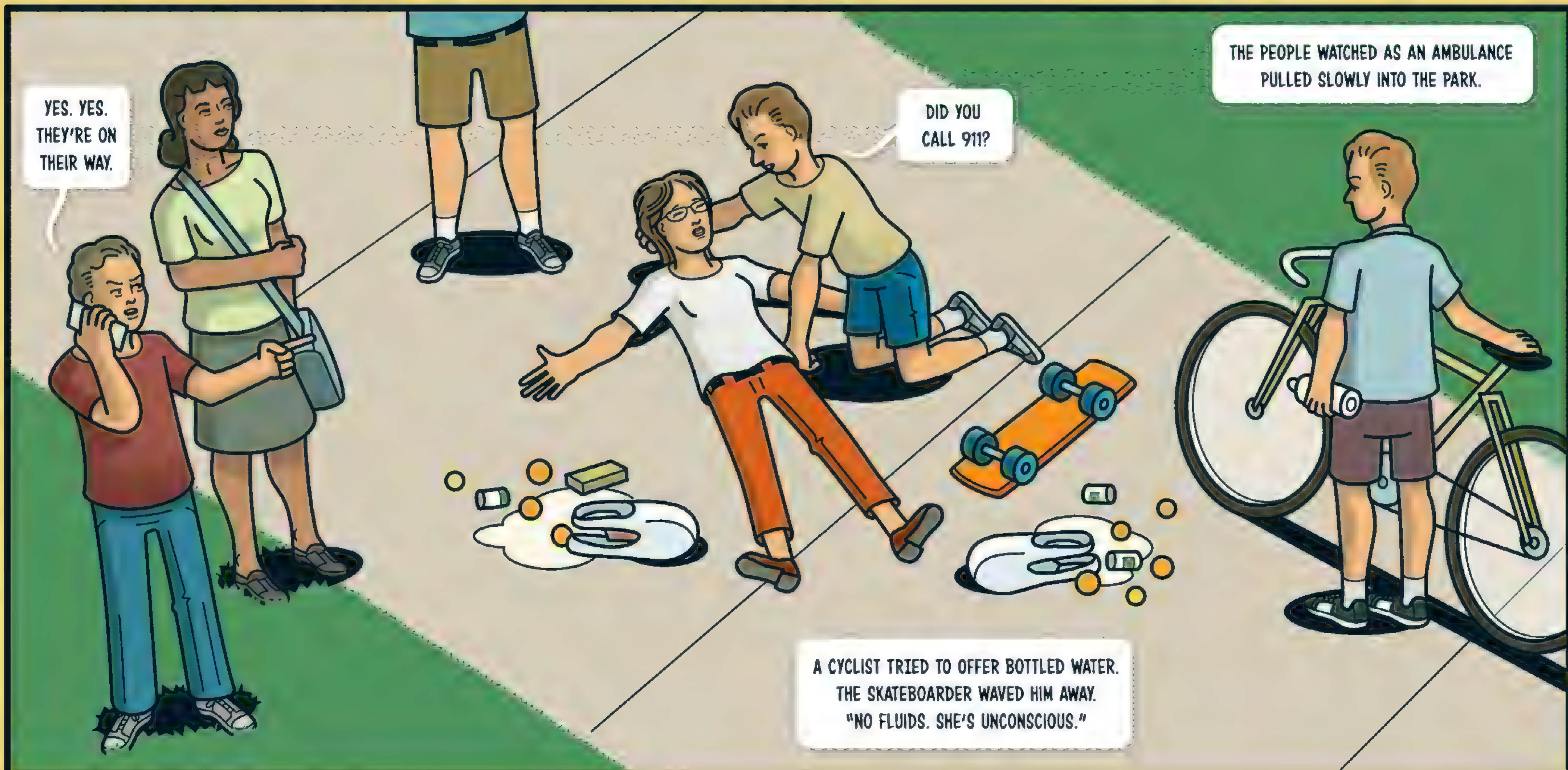
HER VISION STARTED TO TUNNEL.



HER CHEST HEAVED AS HER LUNGS TRIED TO PULL IN AIR.

HER GLASSES SLIPPED OFF HER WET NOSE, AND SHE LOST HER BALANCE TRYING TO GRAB THEM.







PALM FRONDS  
SWAYED IN THE  
AFTERNOON  
BREEZE.

THE SUN WAS  
A YELLOW EGG  
IN THE SKY...

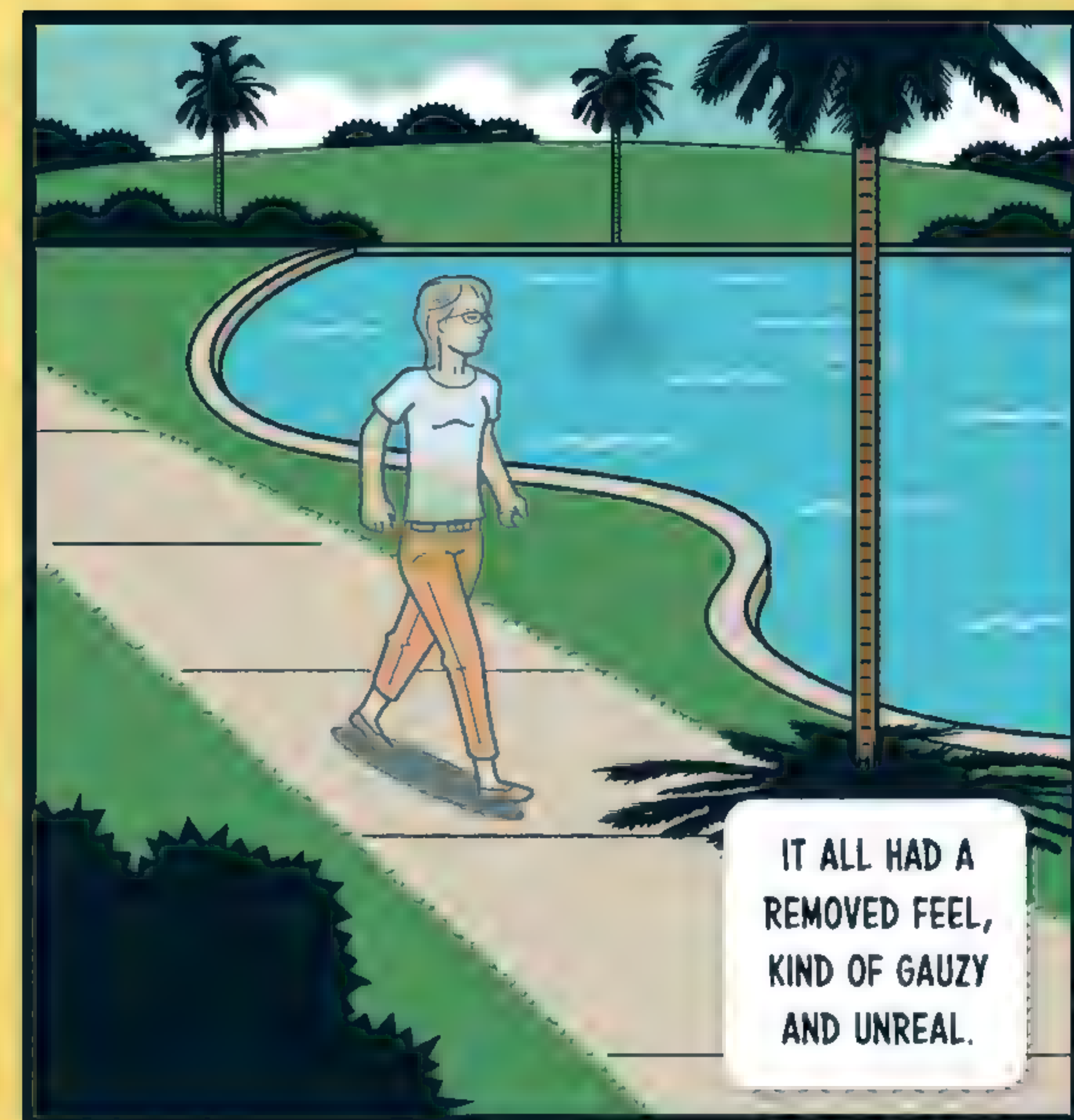
...AND THE  
GIRL WAS  
DYING.

SHE GOT UP AND  
LOOKED AT THE  
PEOPLE STANDING  
AROUND HER BODY  
ON THE SIDEWALK.

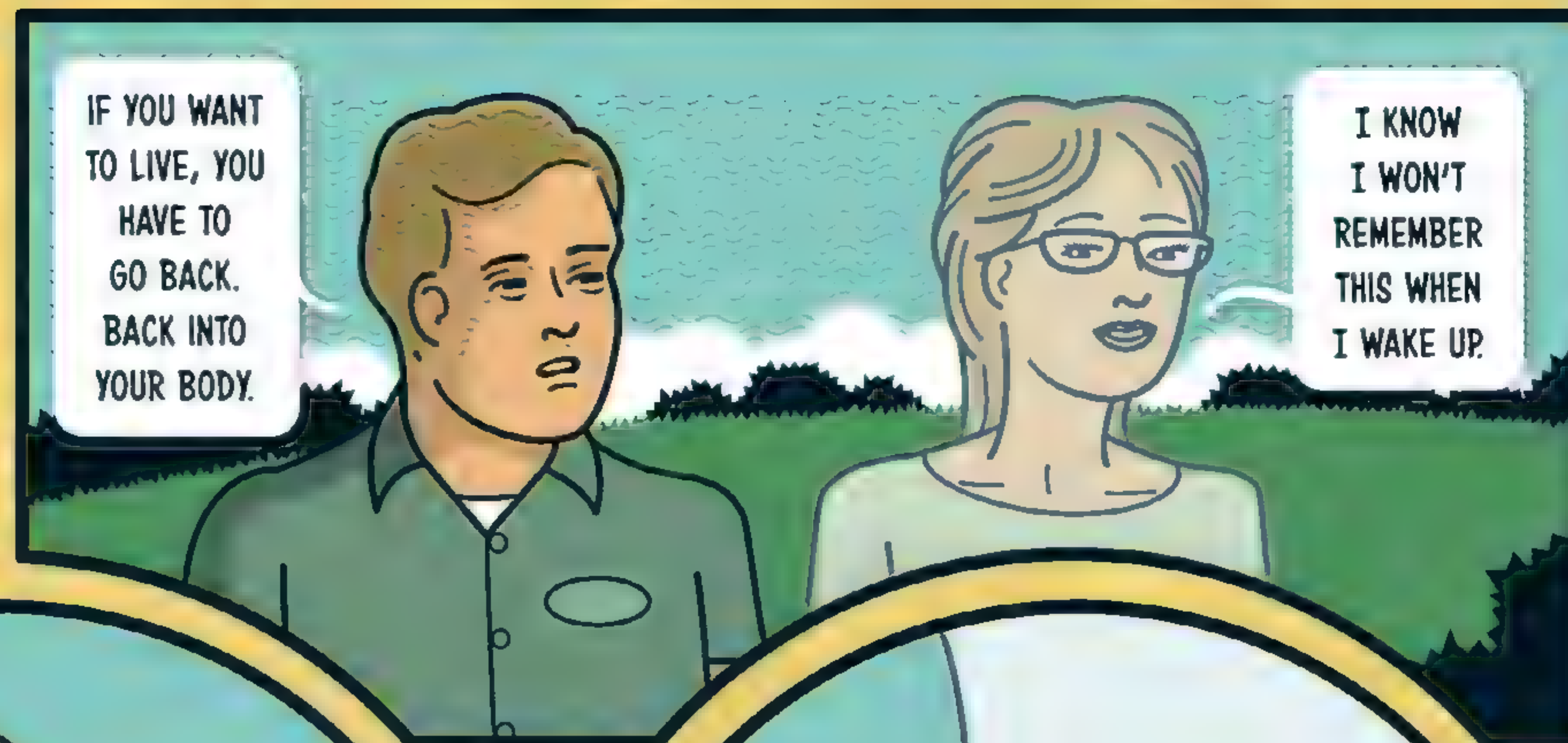
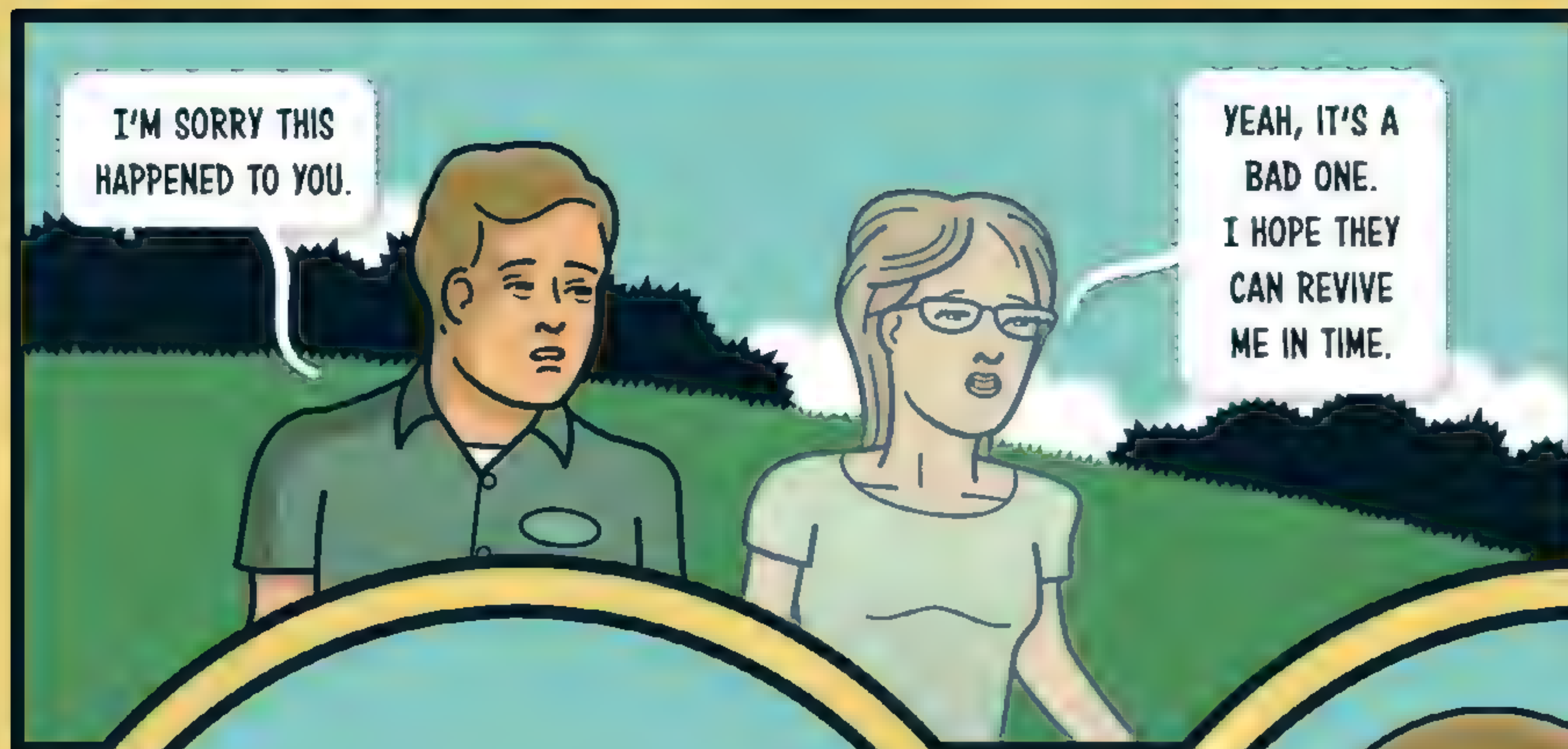
THE EMTS OPENED  
THE BACK DOOR OF  
THEIR AMBULANCE  
AND TROTTED OVER  
WITH A KIT BAG.

THEIR RADIO  
CRACKLED AS  
A POLICE CAR  
PULLED IN  
BEHIND THEM.

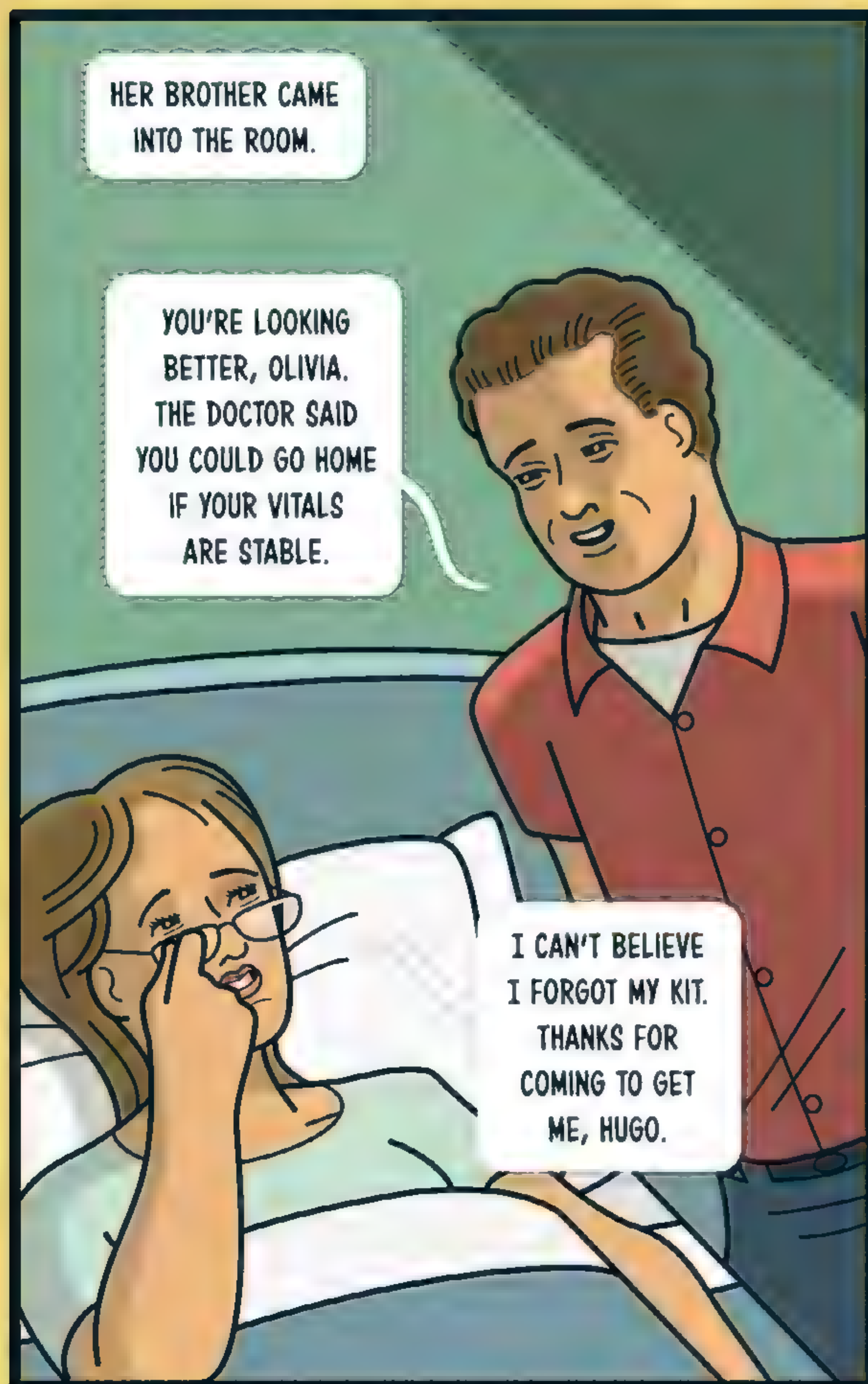








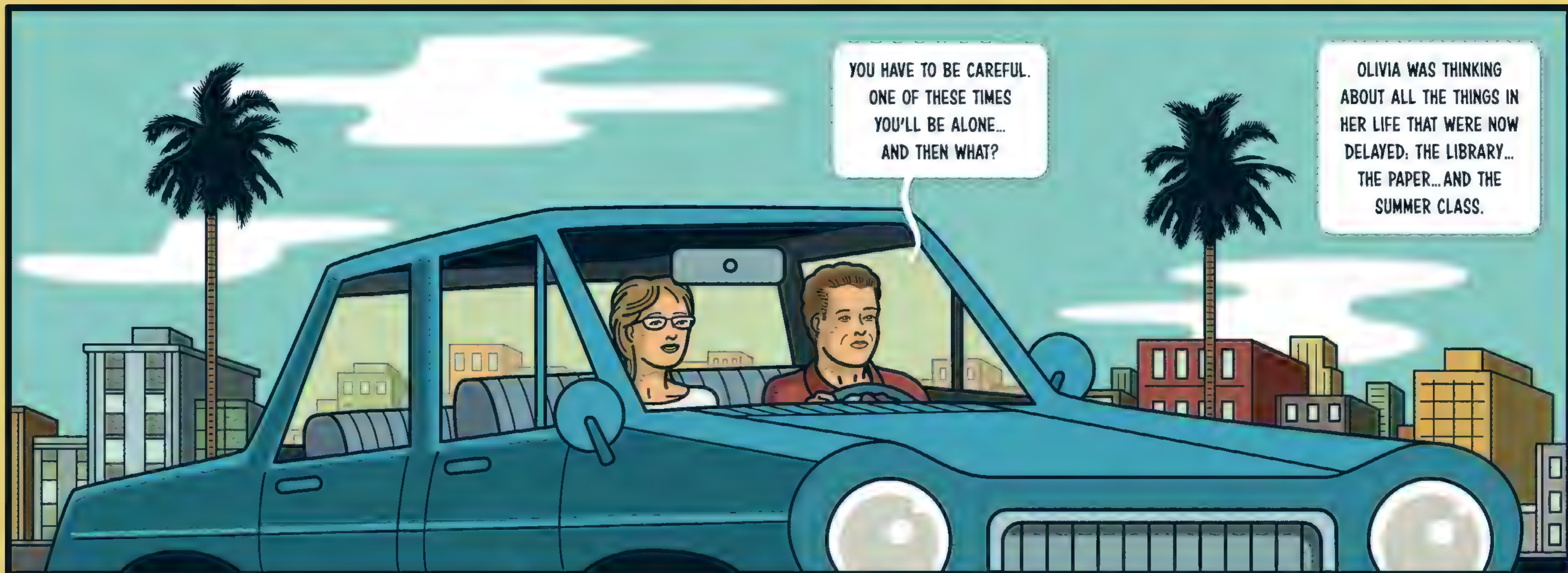












YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.  
ONE OF THESE TIMES  
YOU'LL BE ALONE...  
AND THEN WHAT?

OLIVIA WAS THINKING  
ABOUT ALL THE THINGS IN  
HER LIFE THAT WERE NOW  
DELAYED: THE LIBRARY...  
THE PAPER...AND THE  
SUMMER CLASS.



YOU'RE RIGHT...



...I'LL BE  
MORE CAREFUL.  
FROM NOW ON.



HUGO ROLLED  
HIS EYES.





THEIR MOM WAS  
IN THE KITCHEN  
WHEN THEY  
GOT HOME.

AFTER SHE RECOUNTED THE STORY  
ONE MORE TIME, AND LISTENED  
TO HER MOTHER'S WARNINGS,  
SHE EXCUSED HERSELF AND  
WENT TO HER ROOM.



HER WHOLE WEEK  
WAS MESSED UP  
NOW BECAUSE  
OF A BEE STING.



SHE WAS ALWAYS WEAK AFTER ONE  
OF THESE ATTACKS. TRYING TO DO  
TOO MUCH TOO SOON WOULD JUST  
MAKE IT WORSE.



SHE CHANGED HER CLOTHES  
AND GATHERED UP A PILE OF  
JEANS FOR THE LAUNDRY.

SHE FELT A LUMP  
IN HER PANT  
POCKET.

IF SHE LEFT A TISSUE IN HER POCKET, IT WOULD  
DISSOLVE IN THE WASH AND SPREAD LITTLE  
BITS OF PAPER OVER EVERYTHING.

INSTEAD, SHE  
PULLED OUT  
A FOLDED  
ENVELOPE.

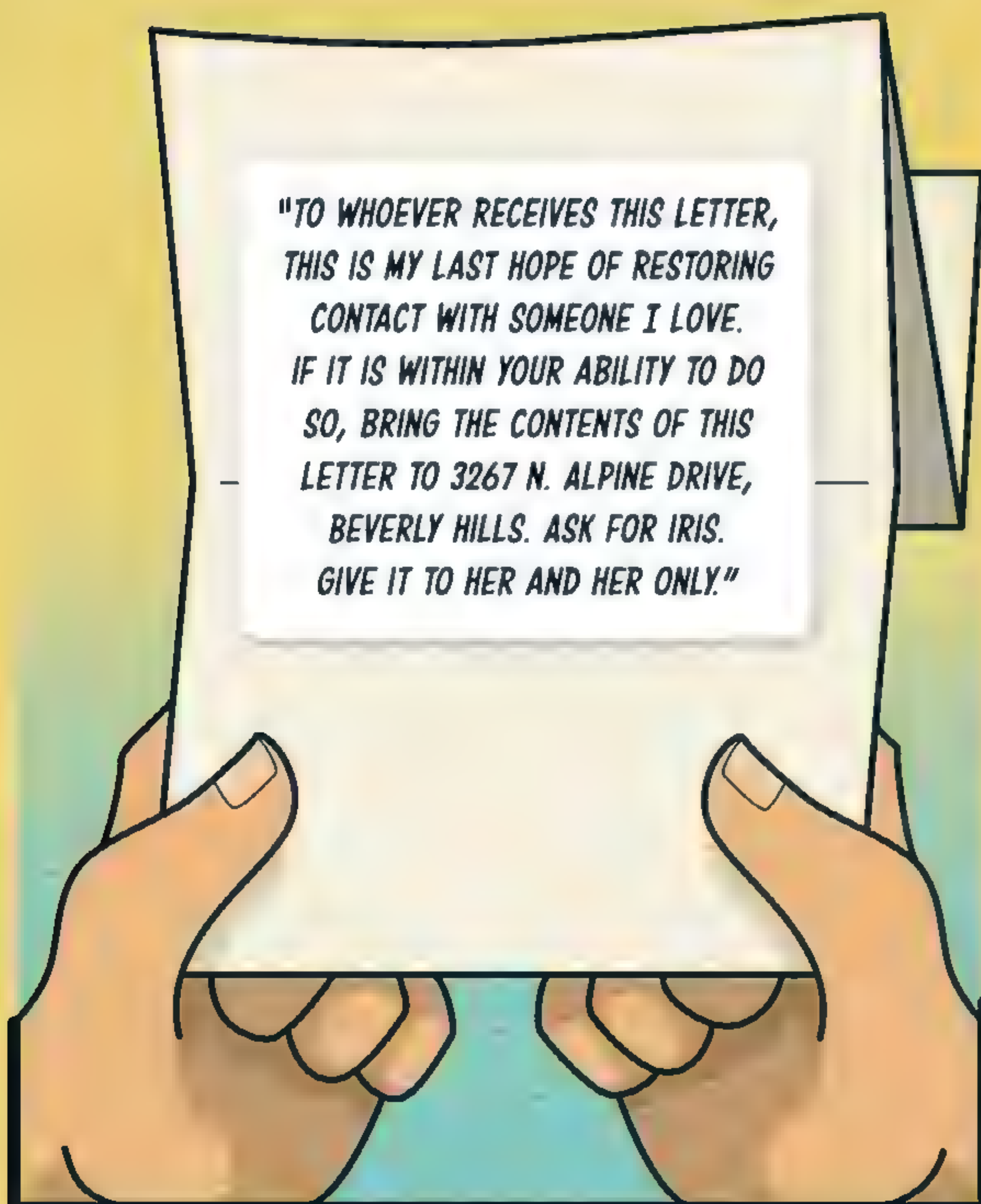




IT WAS MADE OF HEAVY, CREAM-COLORED PAPER. SHE FLIPPED IT OVER AND TORE IT OPEN.



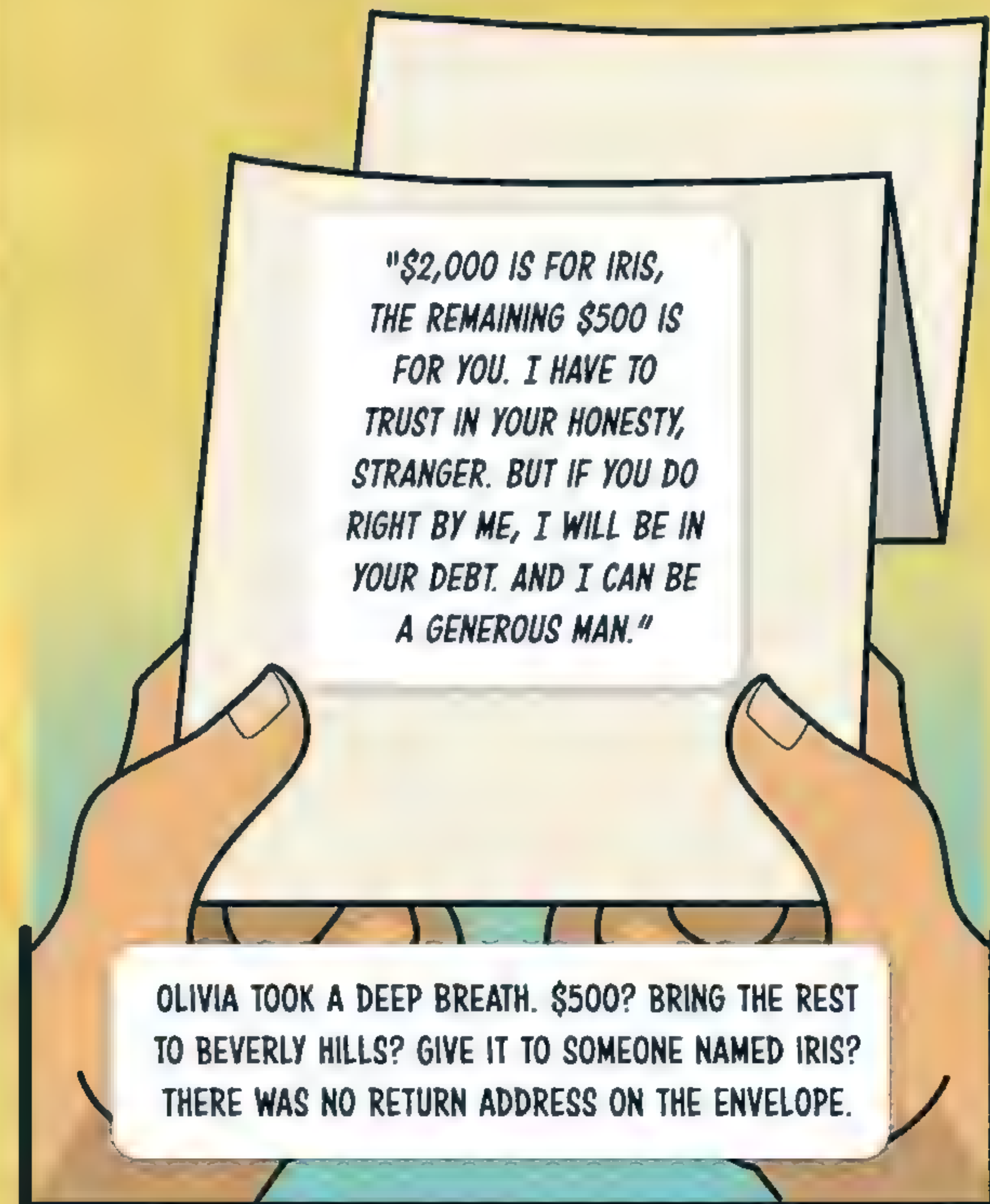
SHE PULLED OUT THE NOTE INSIDE. IT WAS WRITTEN IN CURSIVE.



"TO WHOEVER RECEIVES THIS LETTER, THIS IS MY LAST HOPE OF RESTORING CONTACT WITH SOMEONE I LOVE. IF IT IS WITHIN YOUR ABILITY TO DO SO, BRING THE CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER TO 3267 N. ALPINE DRIVE, BEVERLY HILLS. ASK FOR IRIS. GIVE IT TO HER AND HER ONLY."



FIVE BILLS FLUTTERED OUT OF THE FOLDED NOTE. SHE LOOKED AT THEM CLOSELY. SHE'D NEVER SEEN A DENOMINATION LIKE THIS. IT DIDN'T LOOK QUITE REAL.

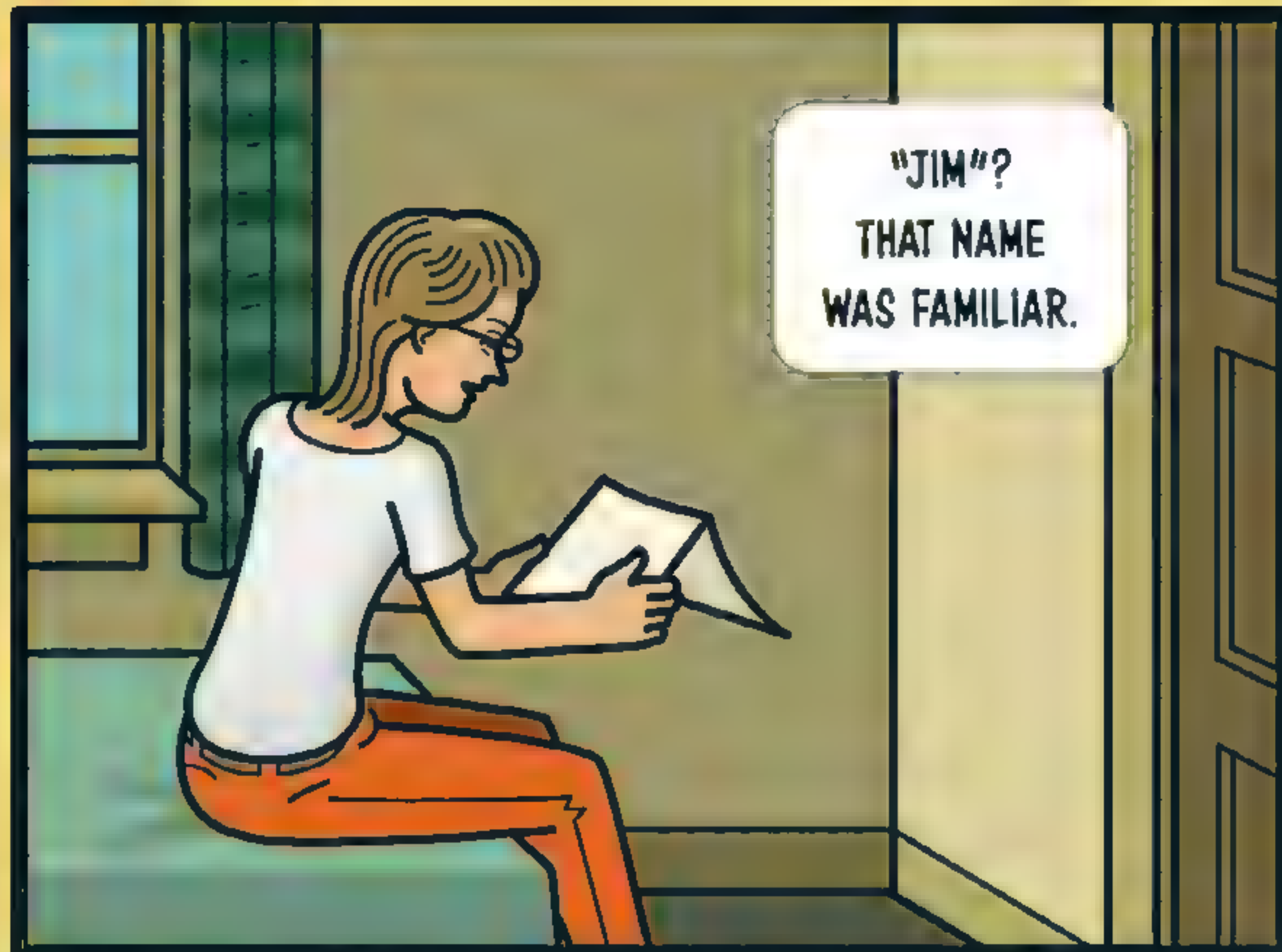


THE NOTE CONTINUED.

"\$2,000 IS FOR IRIS, THE REMAINING \$500 IS FOR YOU. I HAVE TO TRUST IN YOUR HONESTY, STRANGER. BUT IF YOU DO RIGHT BY ME, I WILL BE IN YOUR DEBT. AND I CAN BE A GENEROUS MAN."

OLIVIA TOOK A DEEP BREATH. \$500? BRING THE REST TO BEVERLY HILLS? GIVE IT TO SOMEONE NAMED IRIS? THERE WAS NO RETURN ADDRESS ON THE ENVELOPE.

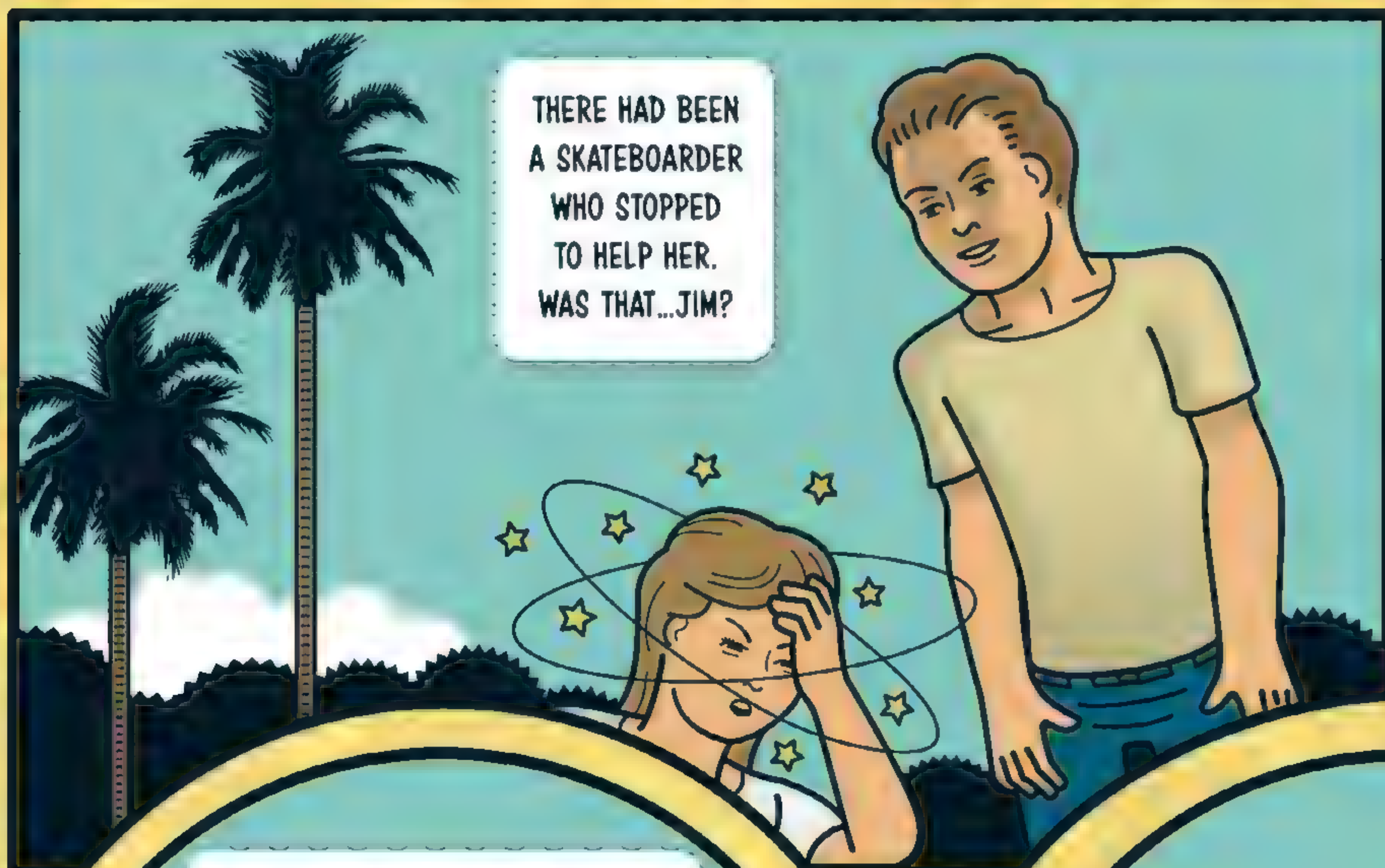




"JIM"?  
THAT NAME  
WAS FAMILIAR.



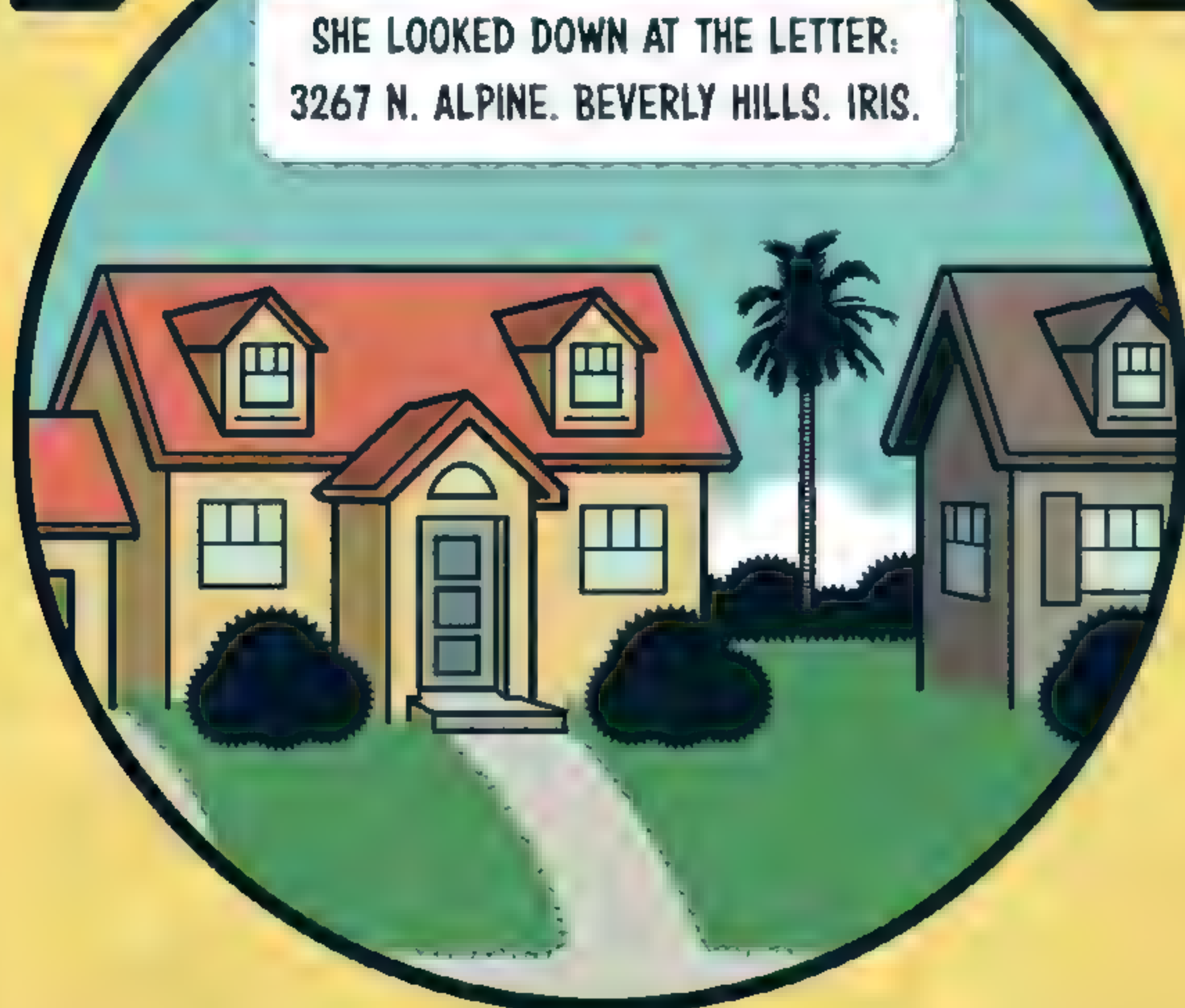
OLIVIA THOUGHT  
BACK TO THE PARK  
AND THE WOOLY  
FEELING SHE'D FELT  
RIGHT BEFORE  
SHE FELL OVER.



THERE HAD BEEN  
A SKATEBOARDER  
WHO STOPPED  
TO HELP HER.  
WAS THAT...JIM?



THERE WAS ANOTHER PERSON.  
THE GUY SHE TALKED TO  
WHILE THEY WALKED THROUGH  
THE PARK. THE ONE WITH  
THE QUIET VOICE.  
THAT WAS JIM.



SHE LOOKED DOWN AT THE LETTER.  
3267 N. ALPINE. BEVERLY HILLS. IRIS.



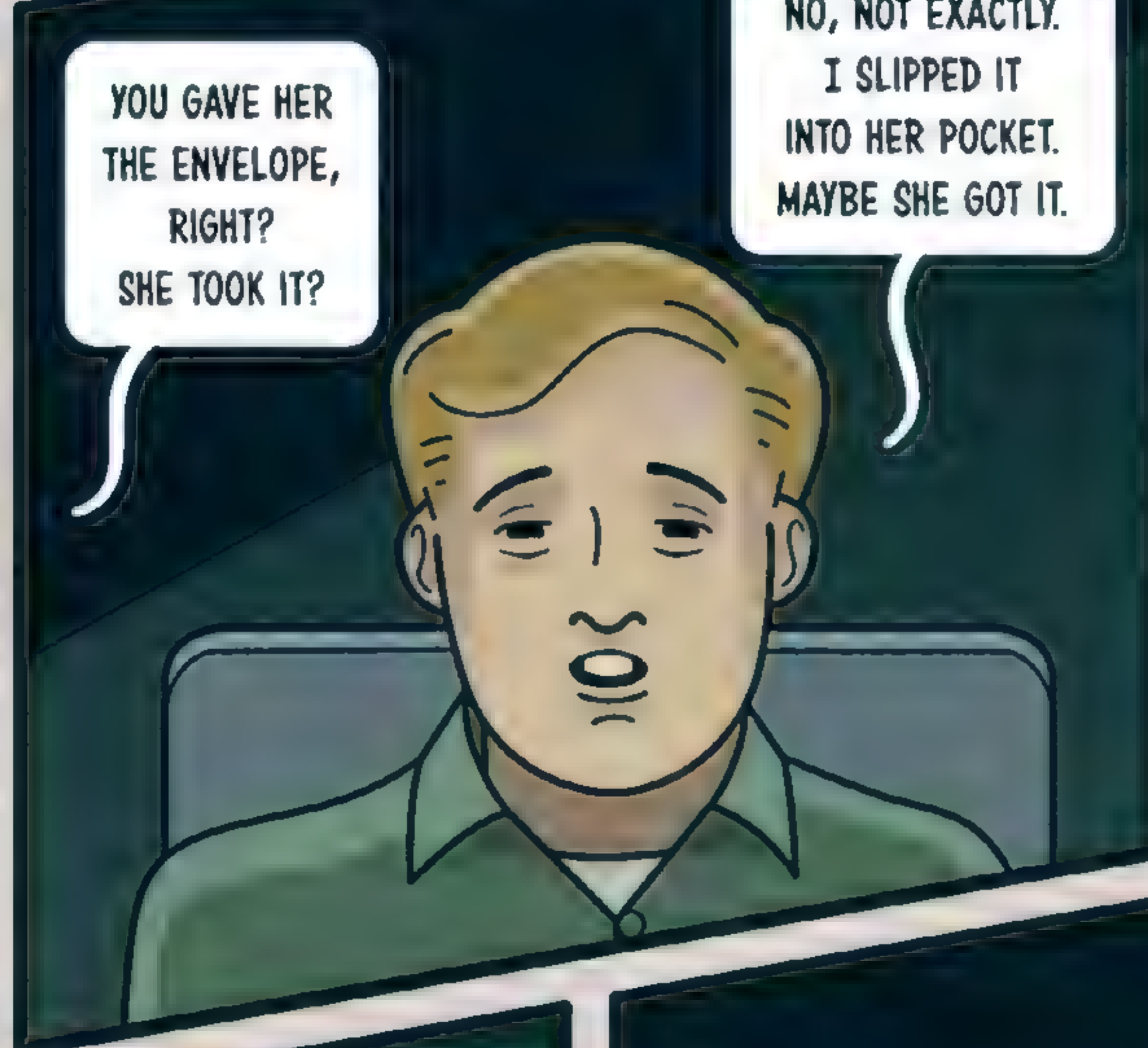
DID HE SLIP THE  
ENVELOPE IN HER  
POCKET WHEN SHE  
WAS UNCONSCIOUS?  
WAS THAT WHEN  
THEY MET?



SHE COULD GO  
TOMORROW.  
WHO WAS IRIS?



# CHAPTER 6







YOU'VE GOT TO KEEP THE NOISE DOWN. IF THE NEIGHBORS HEAR ANYTHING STRANGE, THEY'LL MAKE A PROWLER REPORT.

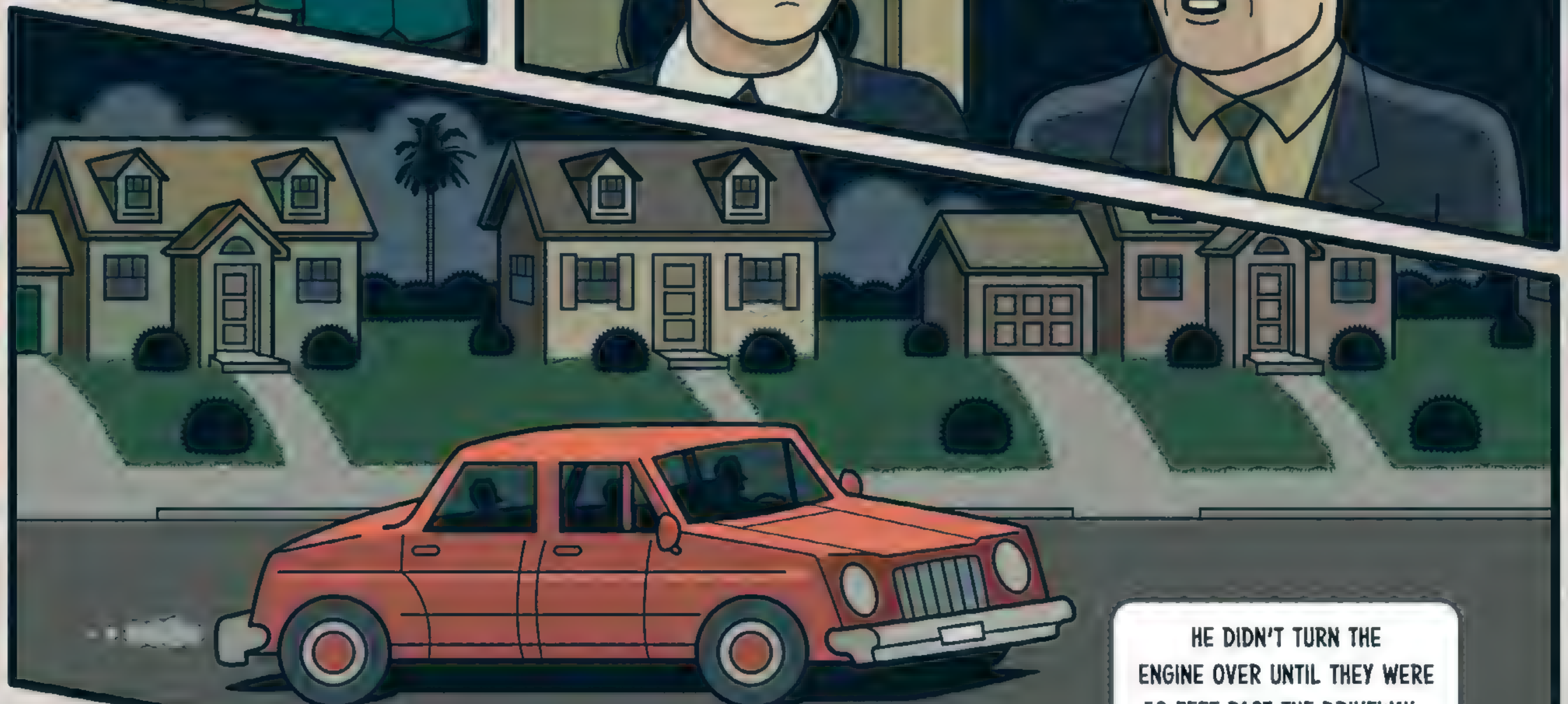


HE'S GOT A REAL CONNECTION. I COULD FEEL IT. KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.

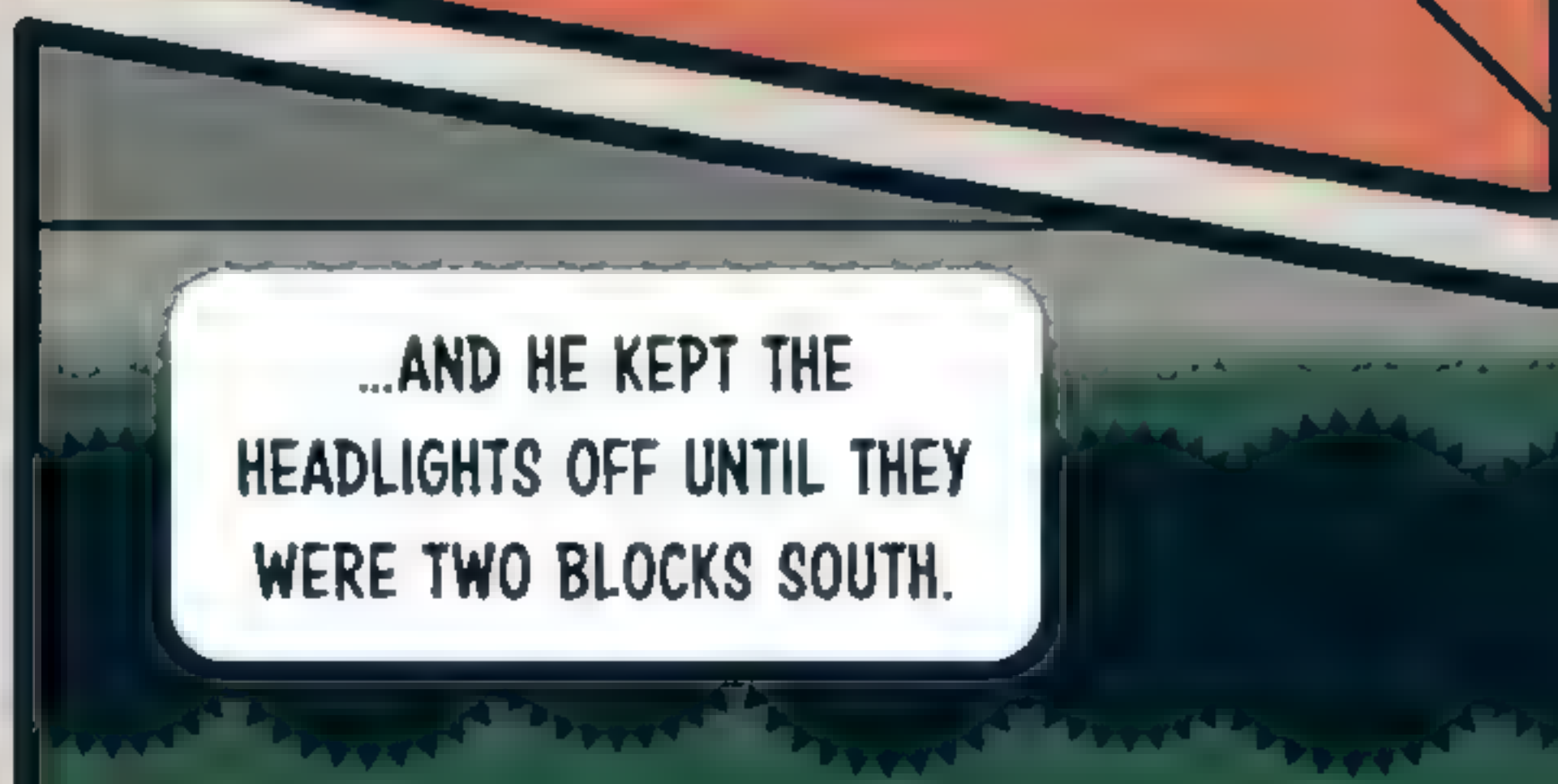
DON'T WORRY. HE'S NOT GETTING OUT OF MY SIGHT.



RAYMOND PUT THE CAR IN NEUTRAL AND LET IT ROLL DOWN THE DRIVE.



HE DIDN'T TURN THE ENGINE OVER UNTIL THEY WERE 50 FEET PAST THE DRIVEWAY...

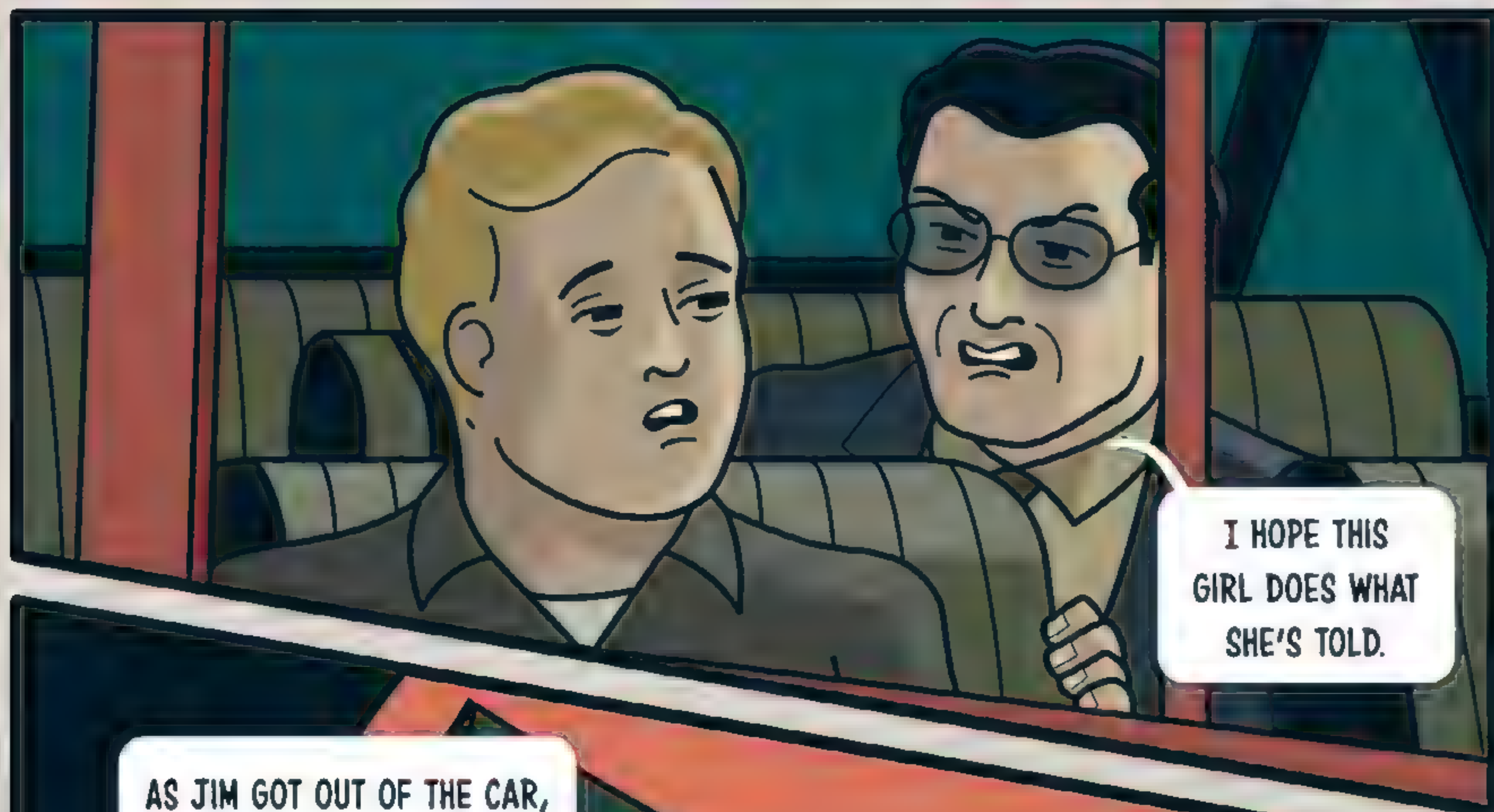


...AND HE KEPT THE HEADLIGHTS OFF UNTIL THEY WERE TWO BLOCKS SOUTH.



AT 1 A.M. THE TRAFFIC WAS STOP-AND-GO ON THE FREEWAY.





I HOPE THIS  
GIRL DOES WHAT  
SHE'S TOLD.



FOR YOUR SAKE...  
AND FOR IRIS'.



WE'LL BE IN TOUCH.



HE HEARD THE CAR  
AS IT DROVE OFF.  
THE BUILDING  
WAS QUIET.



IRIS.

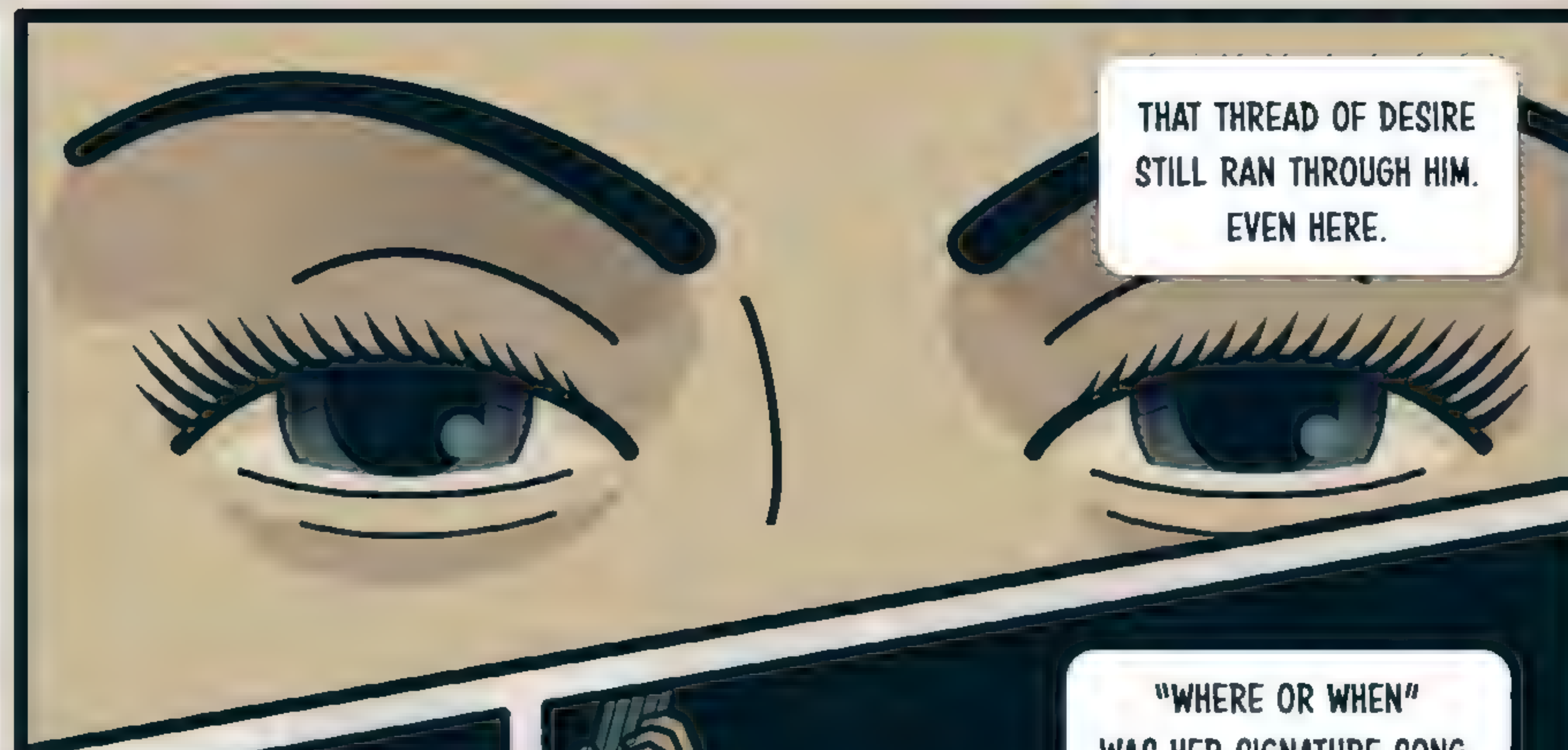


JIM LOOKED OUT AT  
THE DARKENED SKY.

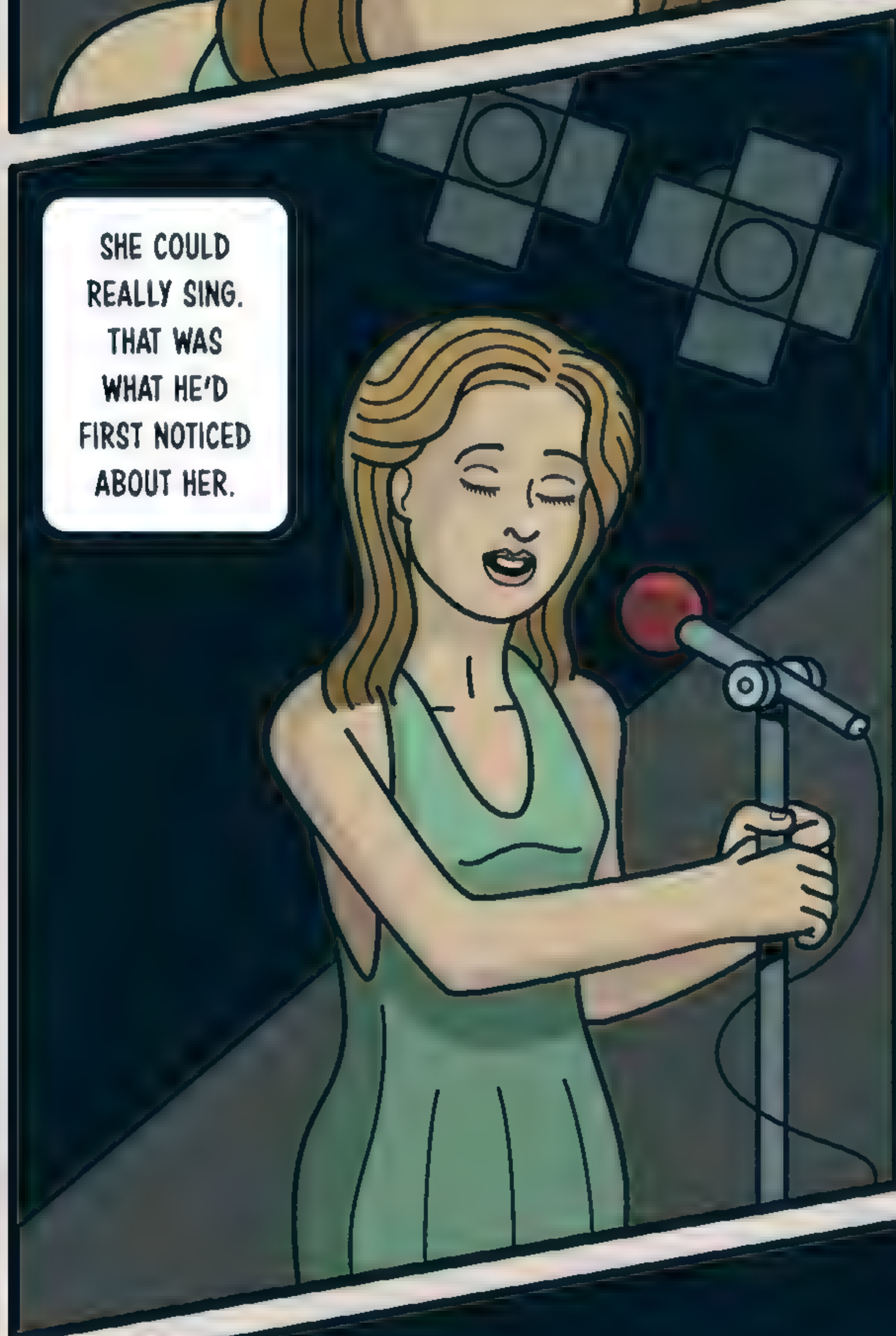




IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME  
SINCE HE'D THOUGHT  
ABOUT HER. THE HURT  
WAS GONE, BUT THERE  
WAS STILL THAT LONGING.



THAT THREAD OF DESIRE  
STILL RAN THROUGH HIM.  
EVEN HERE.



SHE COULD  
REALLY SING.  
THAT WAS  
WHAT HE'D  
FIRST NOTICED  
ABOUT HER.



A BREATHY DELIVERY  
WITH A VIBRATO THAT  
EXTENDED NOTES LONGER  
THAN SEEMED POSSIBLE.



"WHERE OR WHEN"  
WAS HER SIGNATURE SONG.  
IT GOT HIM EVERY TIME.



"THE CLOTHES YOU'RE WEARING  
ARE THE CLOTHES YOU WORE. ♪  
♪ THE SMILE YOU ARE SMILING  
YOU WERE SMILING THEN.  
♪ BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER  
WHERE...OR WHEN..." ♪





THEY STARTED TALKING  
BETWEEN SETS.  
HE'D PLAYED GUITAR  
IN SOME COMBOS, AND  
HE TOLD HER HOW MUCH  
HE LIKED HER BOOK.  
"YEAH?" SHE'D SAID,  
GIVING HIM THAT LOOK.



HE'D FALLEN FOR HER,  
HEAD OVER HEELS.  
HE TRIED TO PLAY IT COOL  
BUT EVERYONE SAW IT.  
EVERYONE BUT EDDIE.



AFTER THE CLUB  
CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT,  
THEY USED TO MEET AT  
THE SANTA MONICA PIER.



ALWAYS CAREFUL,  
THEY ARRIVED IN  
SEPARATE CARS.

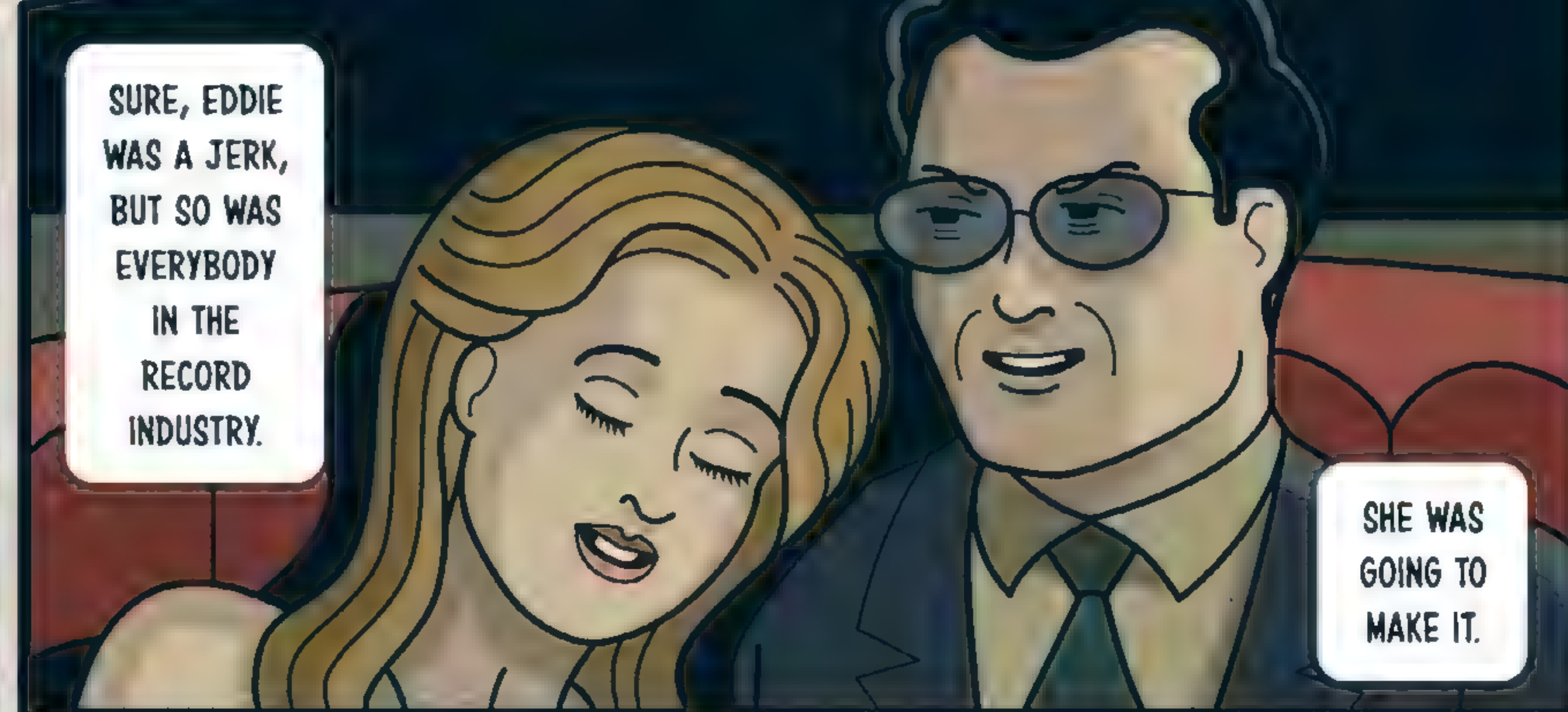


IT WAS QUIET AND THEY  
COULD JUST BE TOGETHER.  
JIM THOUGHT THEY  
HAD A FUTURE...

...IRIS HAD  
OTHER IDEAS.



EDDIE HAD QUITE A THING  
FOR HER, AND EDDIE WIELDED  
POWER. THE KIND OF POWER  
THAT COULD GET HER A  
RECORD CONTRACT.



SURE, EDDIE  
WAS A JERK,  
BUT SO WAS  
EVERYBODY  
IN THE  
RECORD  
INDUSTRY.

SHE WAS  
GOING TO  
MAKE IT.





FOR THE LONGEST TIME, JIM THOUGHT IT WAS RAYMOND WHO HAD RATTED HIM OUT TO EDDIE.



RAYMOND WAS A SHIFTY LITTLE JUNKIE, BUT HE WASN'T ALL THAT SMART.

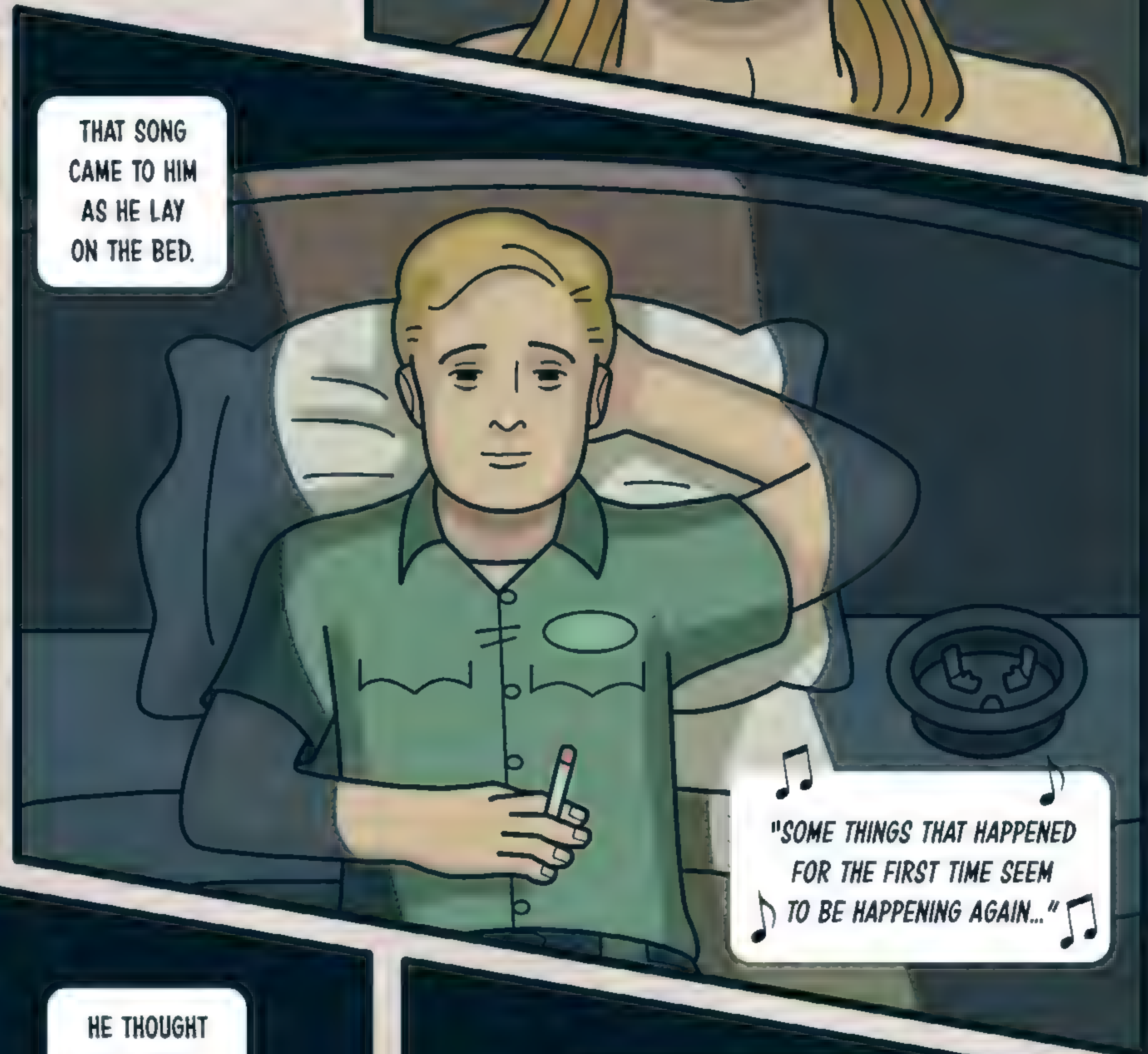


IT WAS IRIS WHO DID IT.



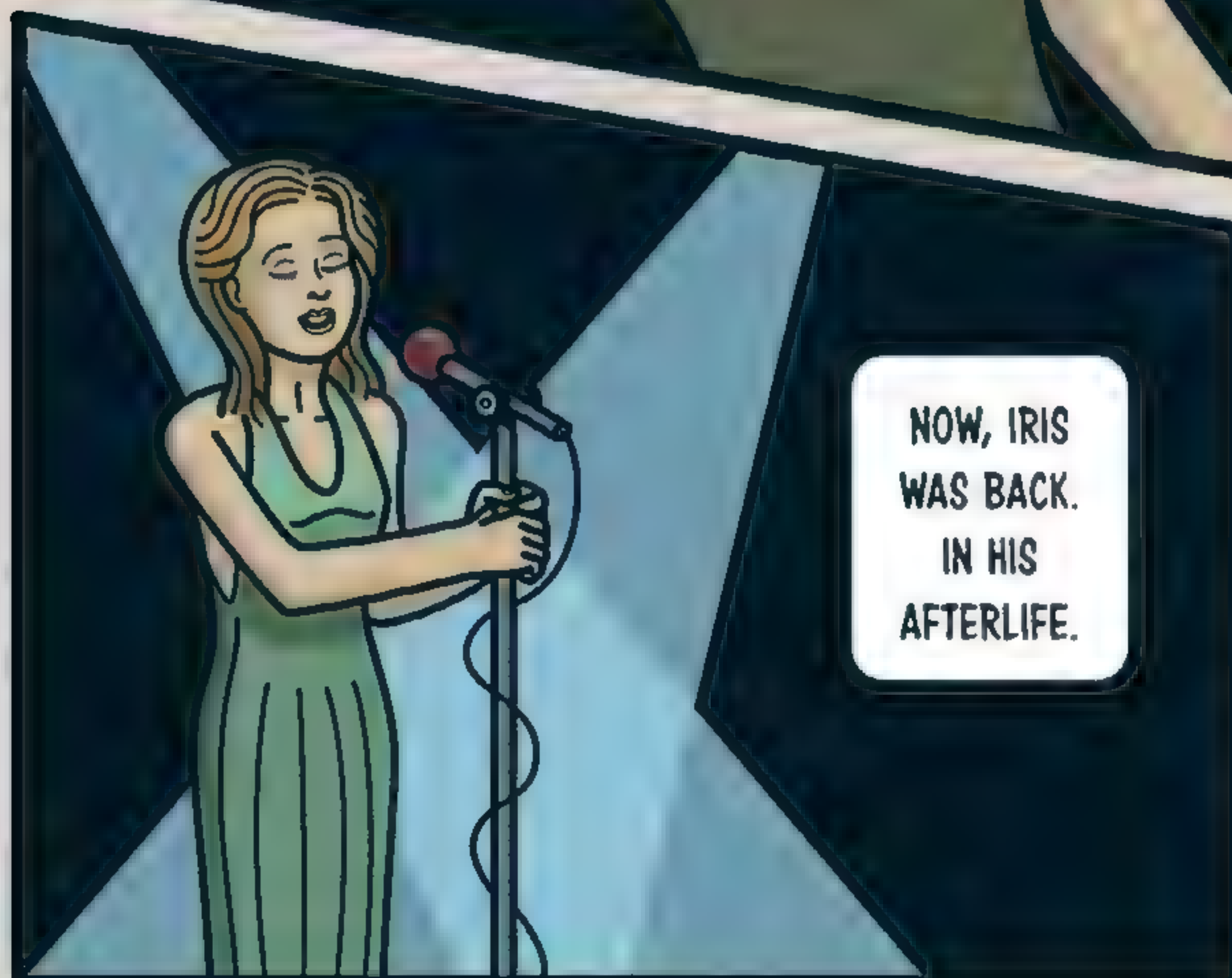
WHEN EDDIE HAD DISCOVERED THEIR AFFAIR, IRIS BLAMED IT ALL ON JIM.

EDDIE WAS SO ANGRY AT JIM THAT HE DIDN'T REALIZE HE WAS BEING PLAYED.



THAT SONG CAME TO HIM AS HE LAY ON THE BED.

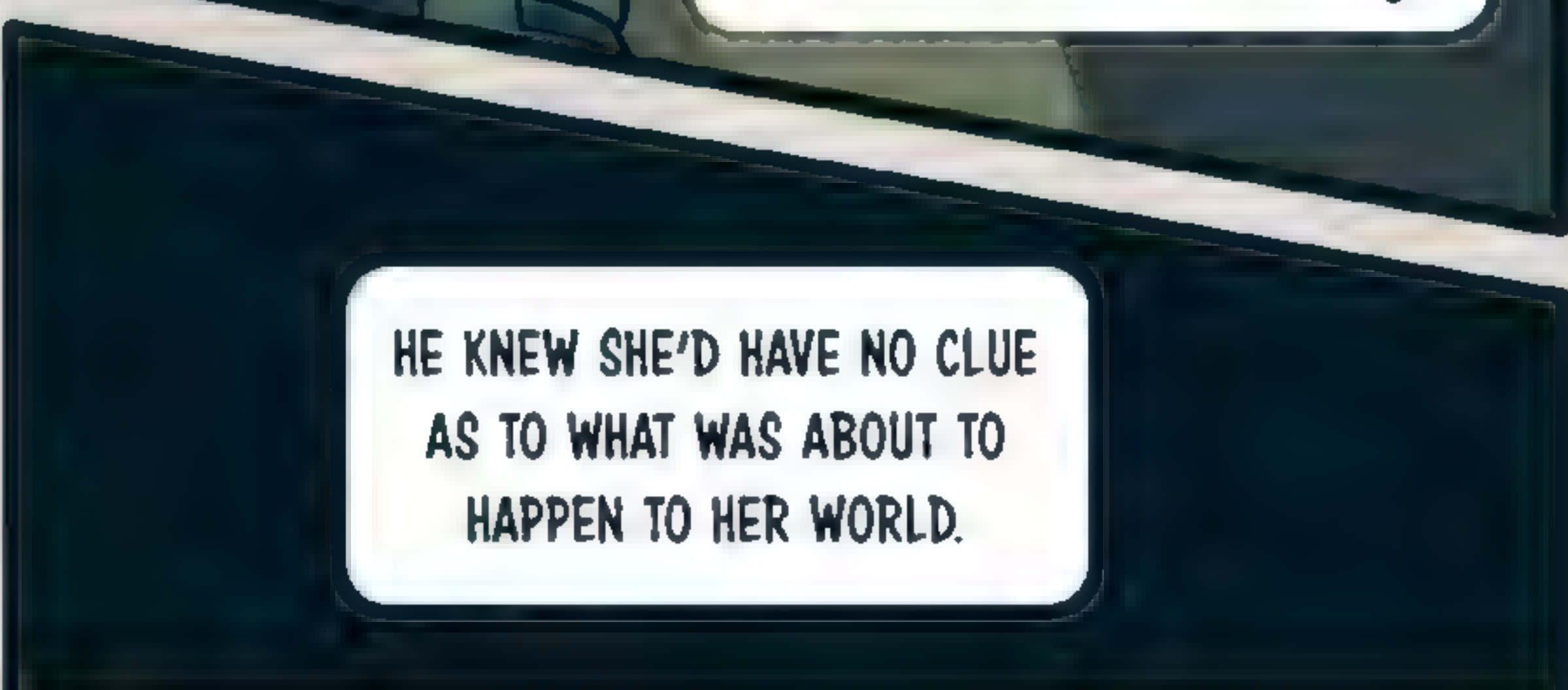
"SOME THINGS THAT HAPPENED FOR THE FIRST TIME SEEM TO BE HAPPENING AGAIN..."



NOW, IRIS WAS BACK. IN HIS AFTERLIFE.

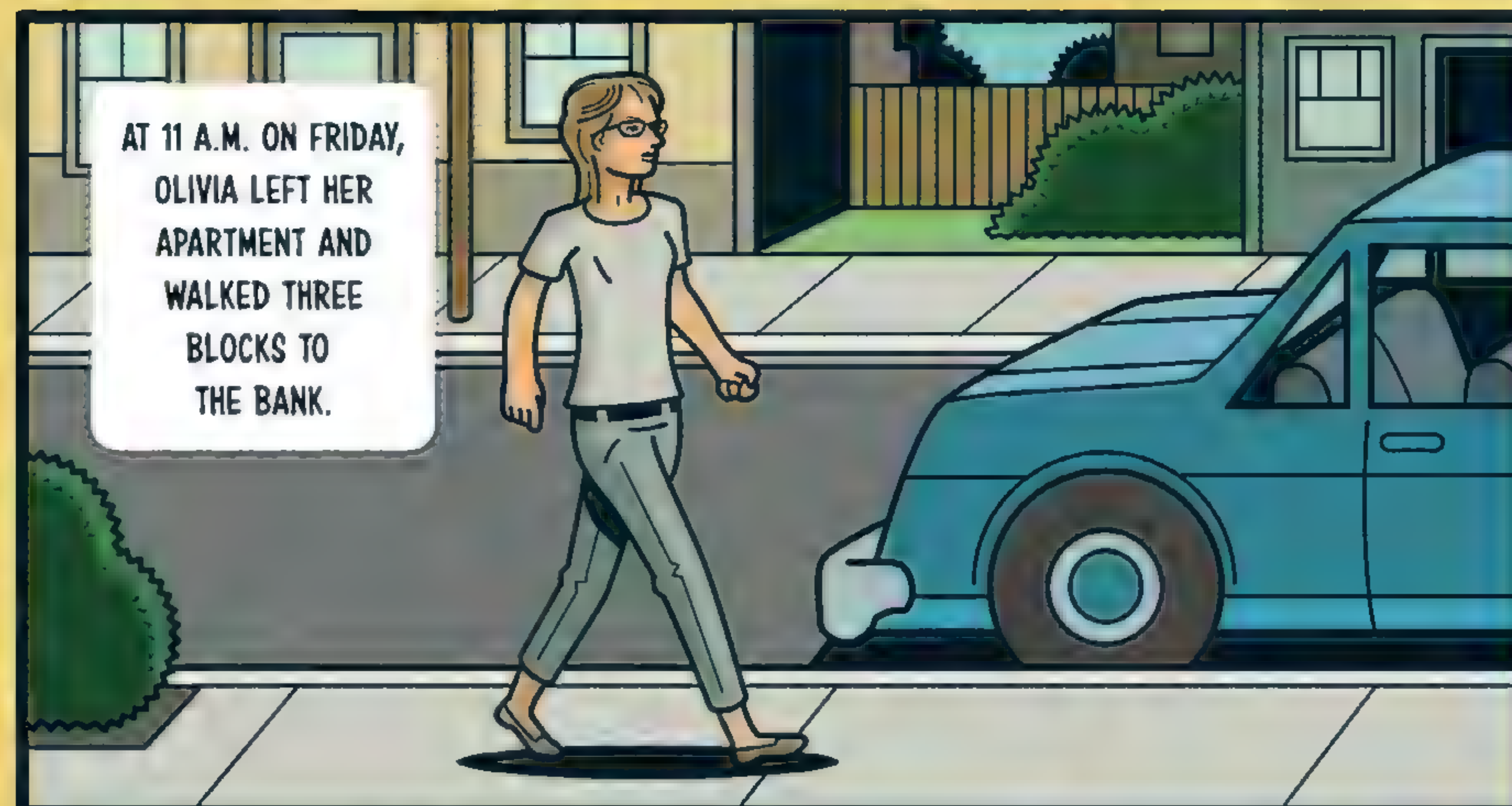


HE THOUGHT OF OLIVIA. THE NICE GIRL IN THE PARK.

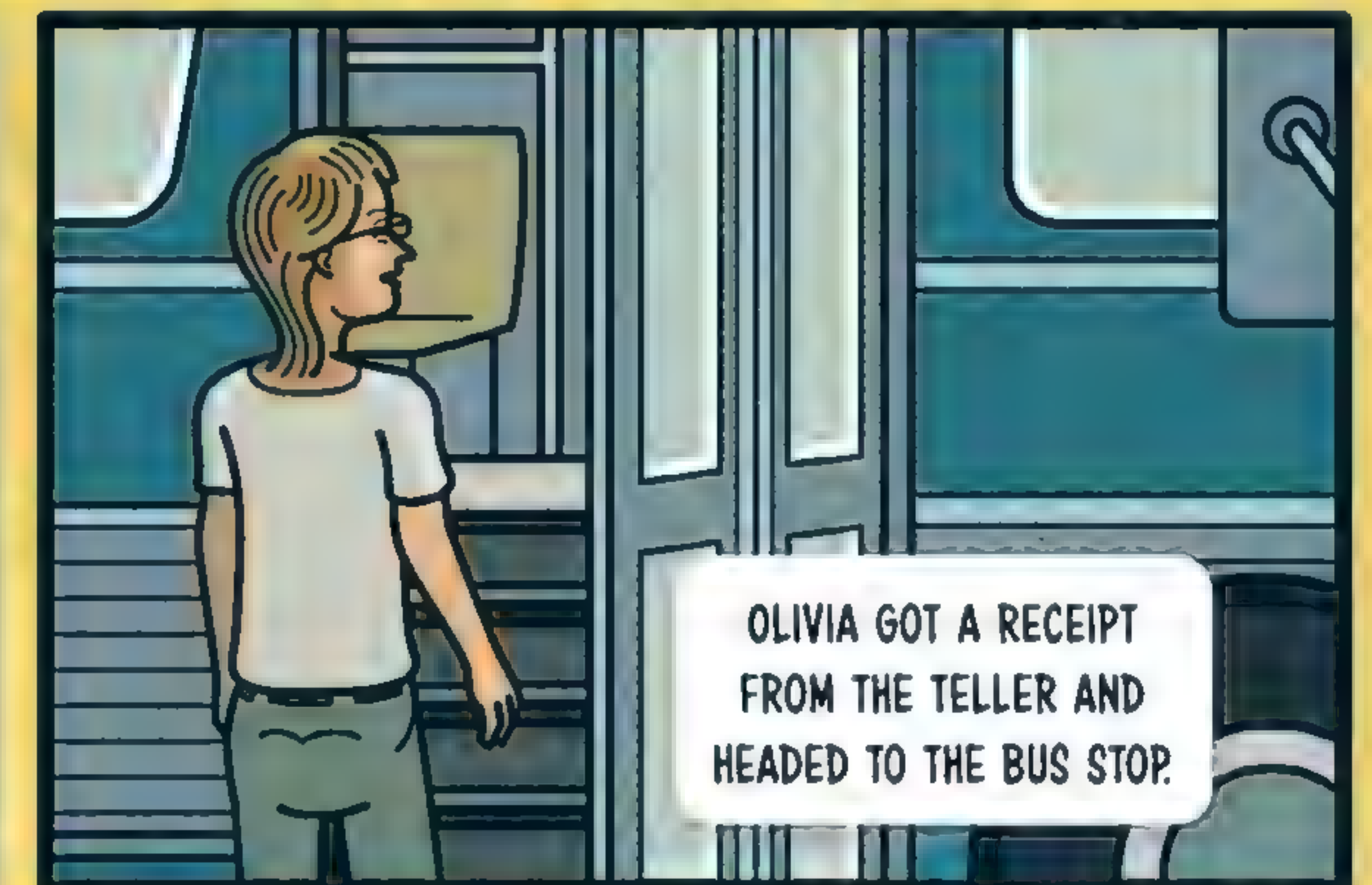
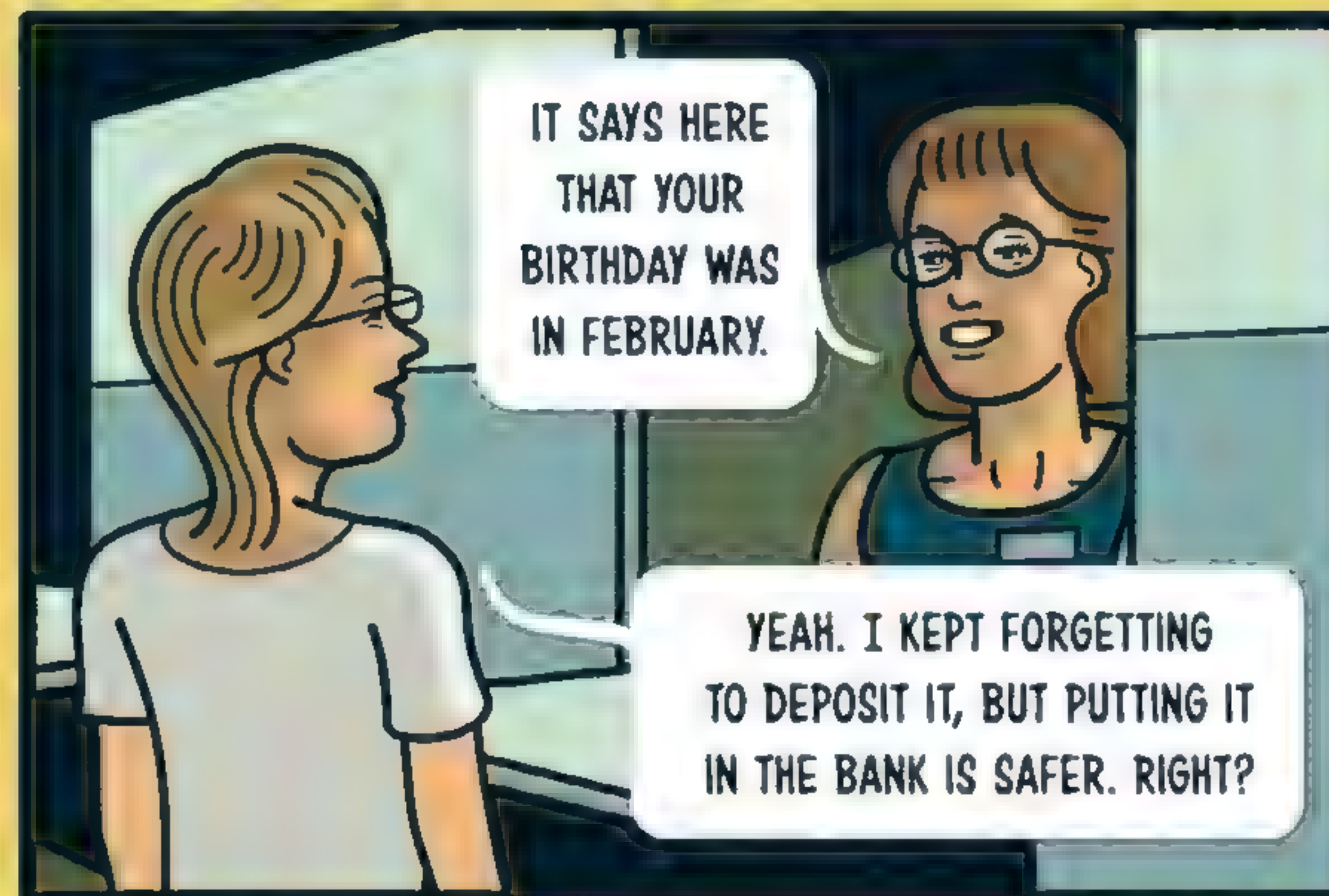
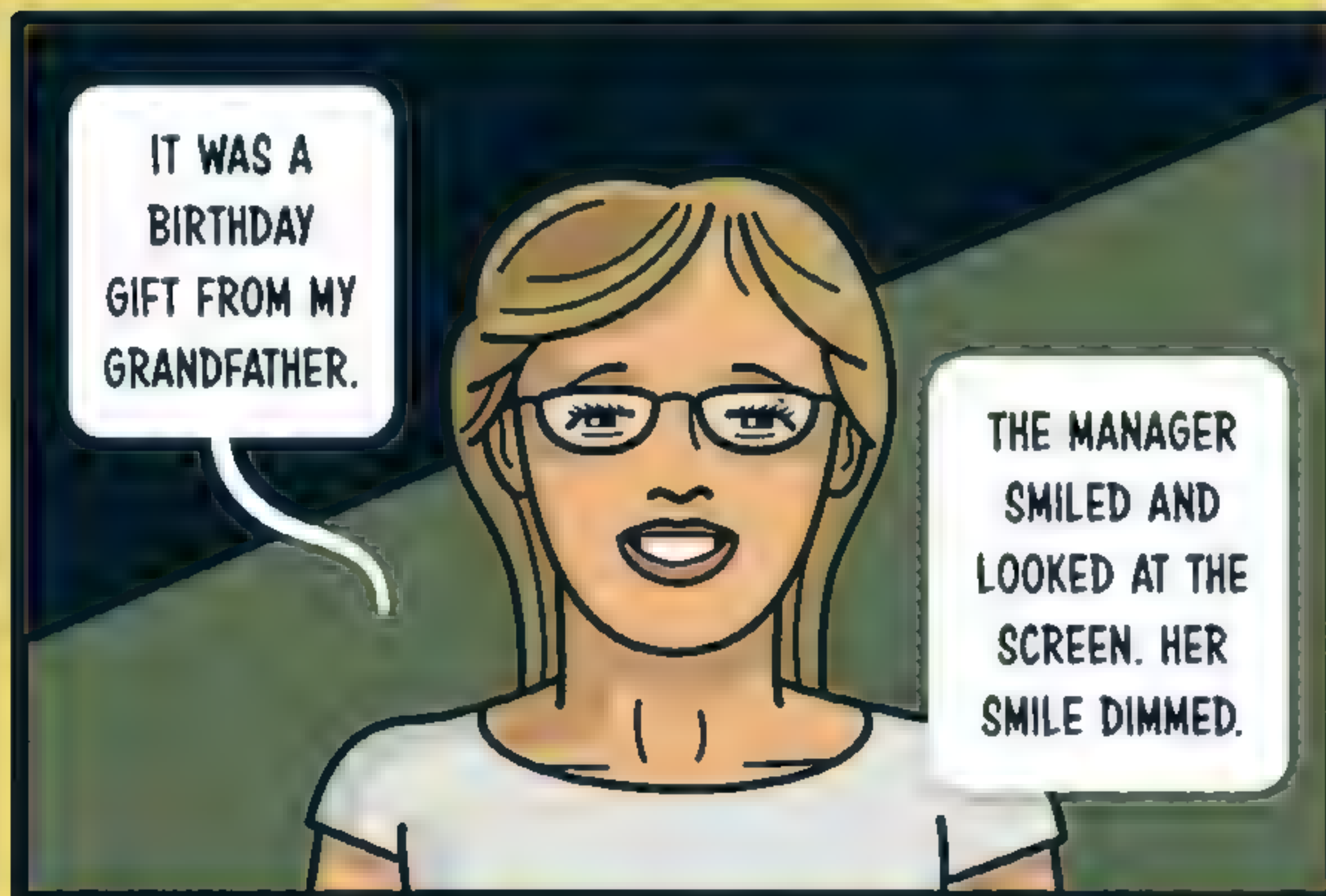
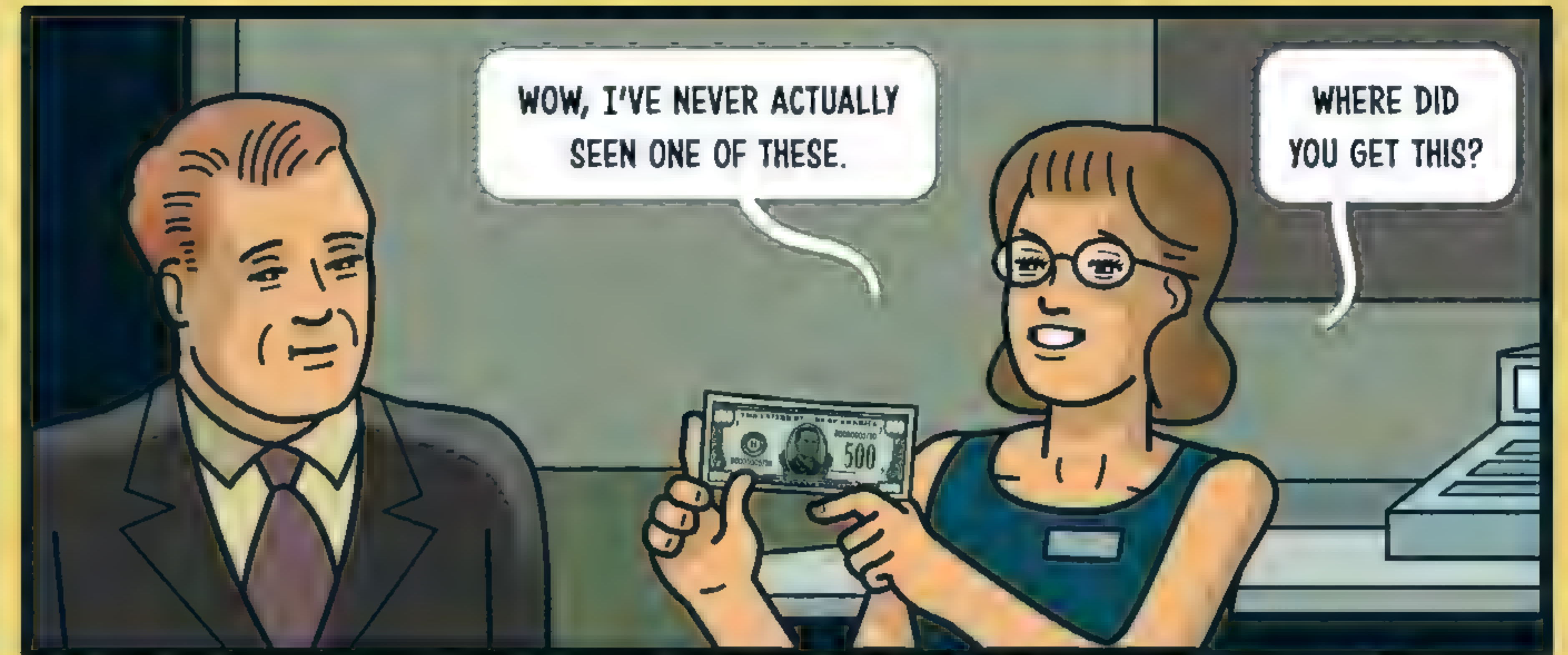


HE KNEW SHE'D HAVE NO CLUE AS TO WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO HER WORLD.

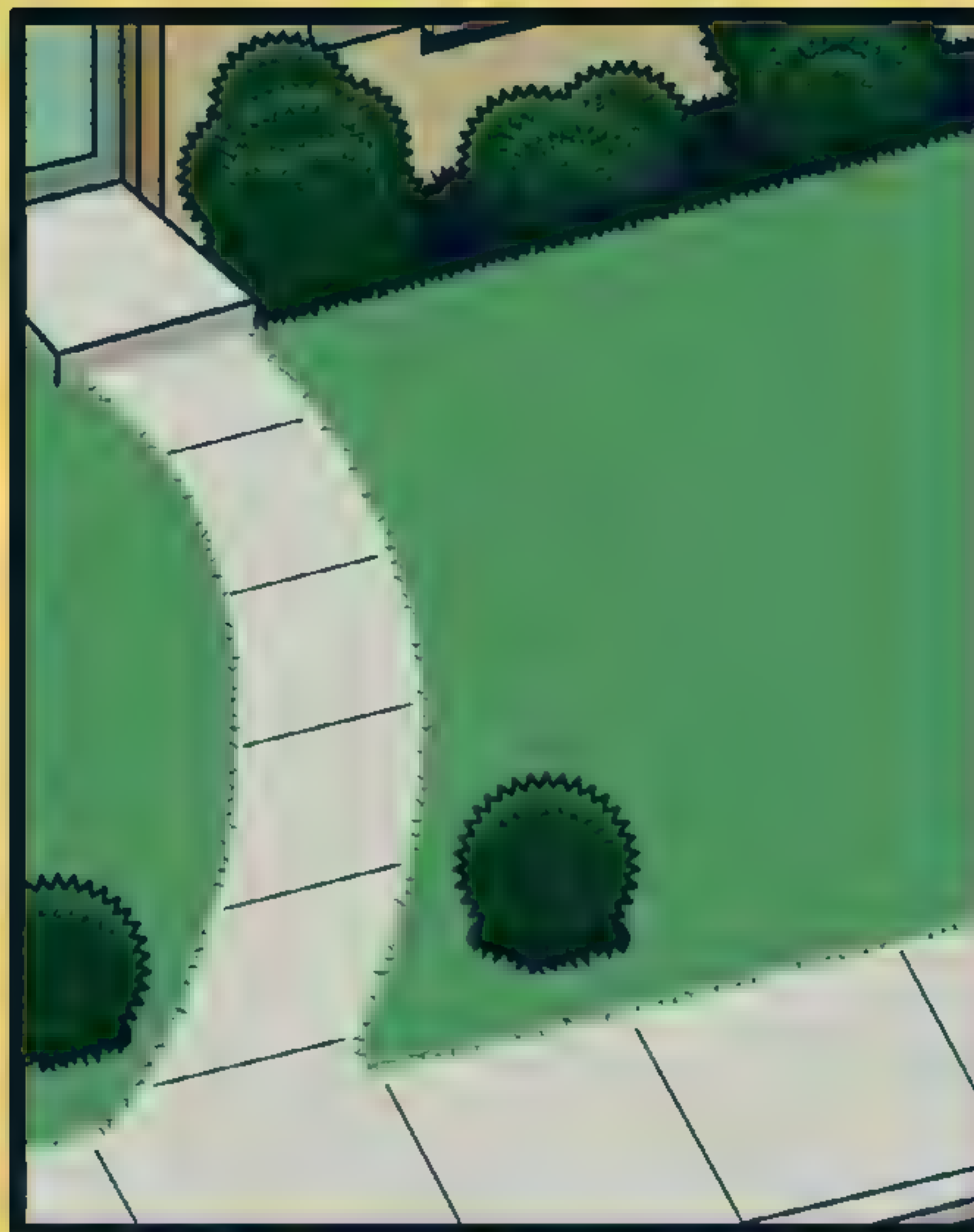




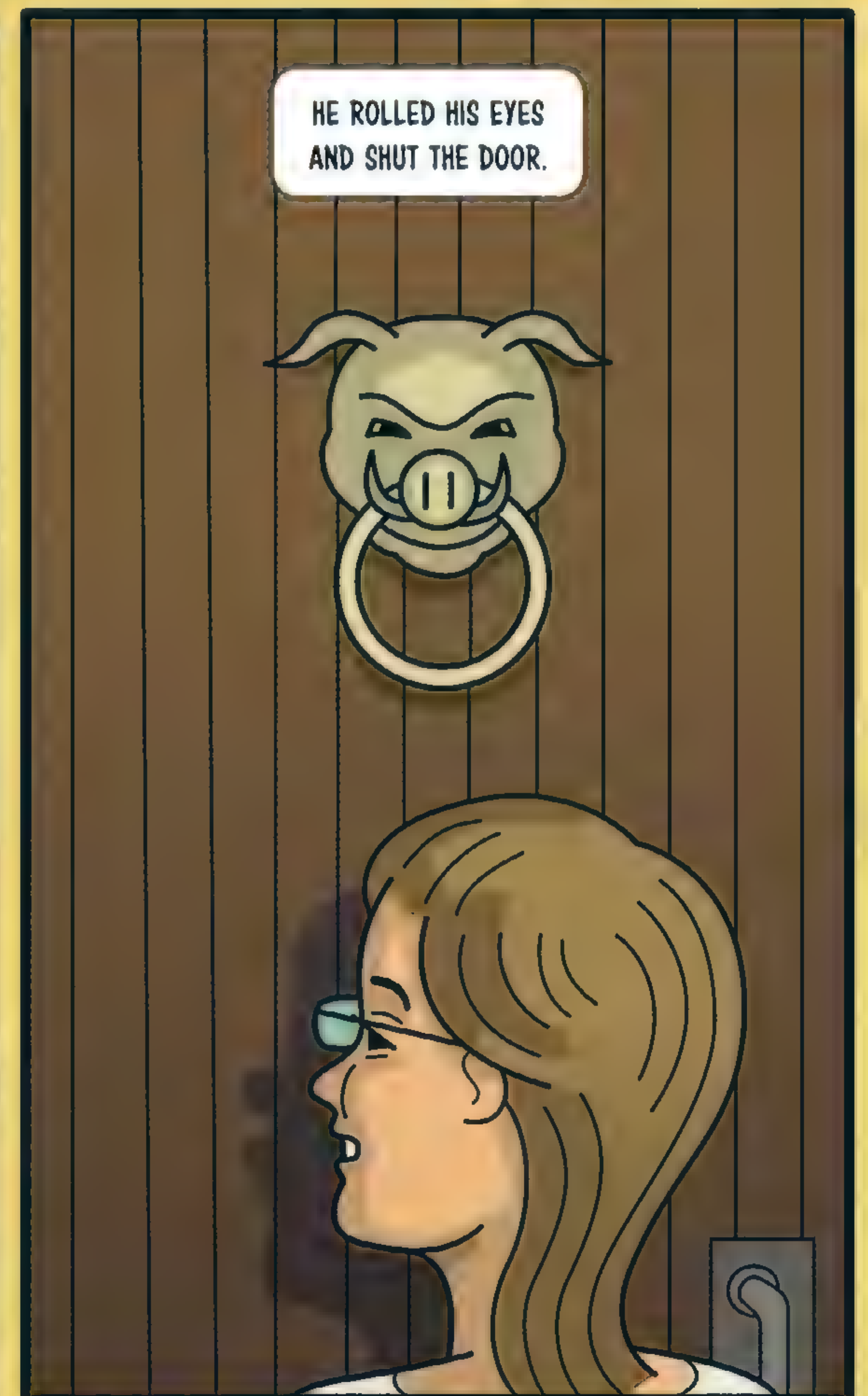
















FOR TWO  
LONG MINUTES,  
OLIVIA STOOD  
AT THE DOOR...



...UNTIL IT  
SWEPT OPEN  
ONCE AGAIN.



SO, YOU HAVE SOMETHING  
FOR ME AND ME ALONE?

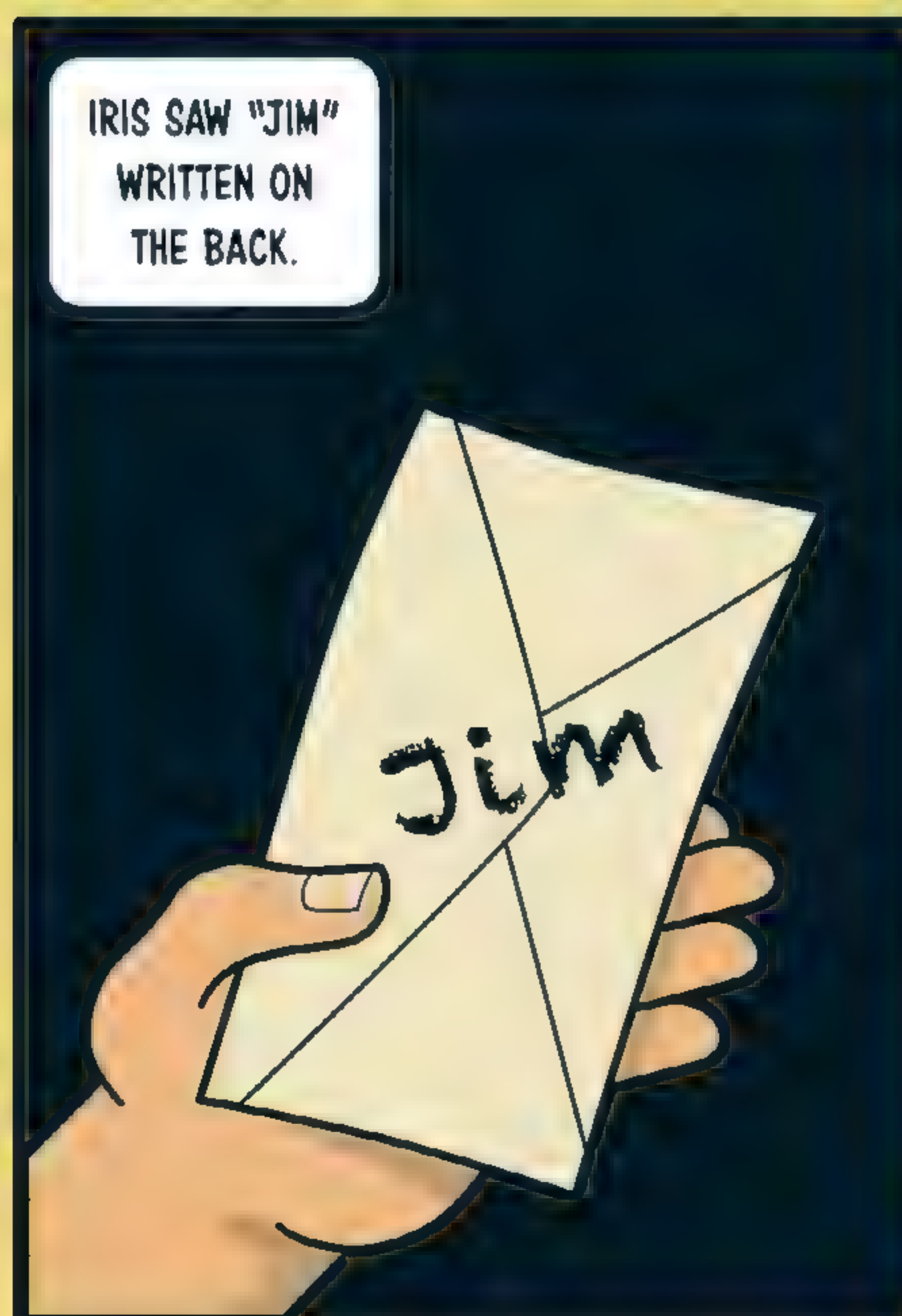




OLIVIA SAID NOTHING  
AS SHE HANDED IRIS  
THE LETTER.

IRIS LOOKED  
AT THE ENVELOPE  
AND SNEERED.

DID EDDIE PUT  
YOU UP TO THIS?



IRIS SAW "JIM"  
WRITTEN ON  
THE BACK.



JIM? YOU GOT  
THIS FROM JIM?



HE WAS IN THE PARK WHEN I HAD MY ATTACK...  
THAT'S WHERE HE SLIPPED ME THE LETTER.







AND I CAN SEE  
YOU OPENED IT.

FOUR  
\$500 BILLS  
SLID OUT  
INTO HER HAND.

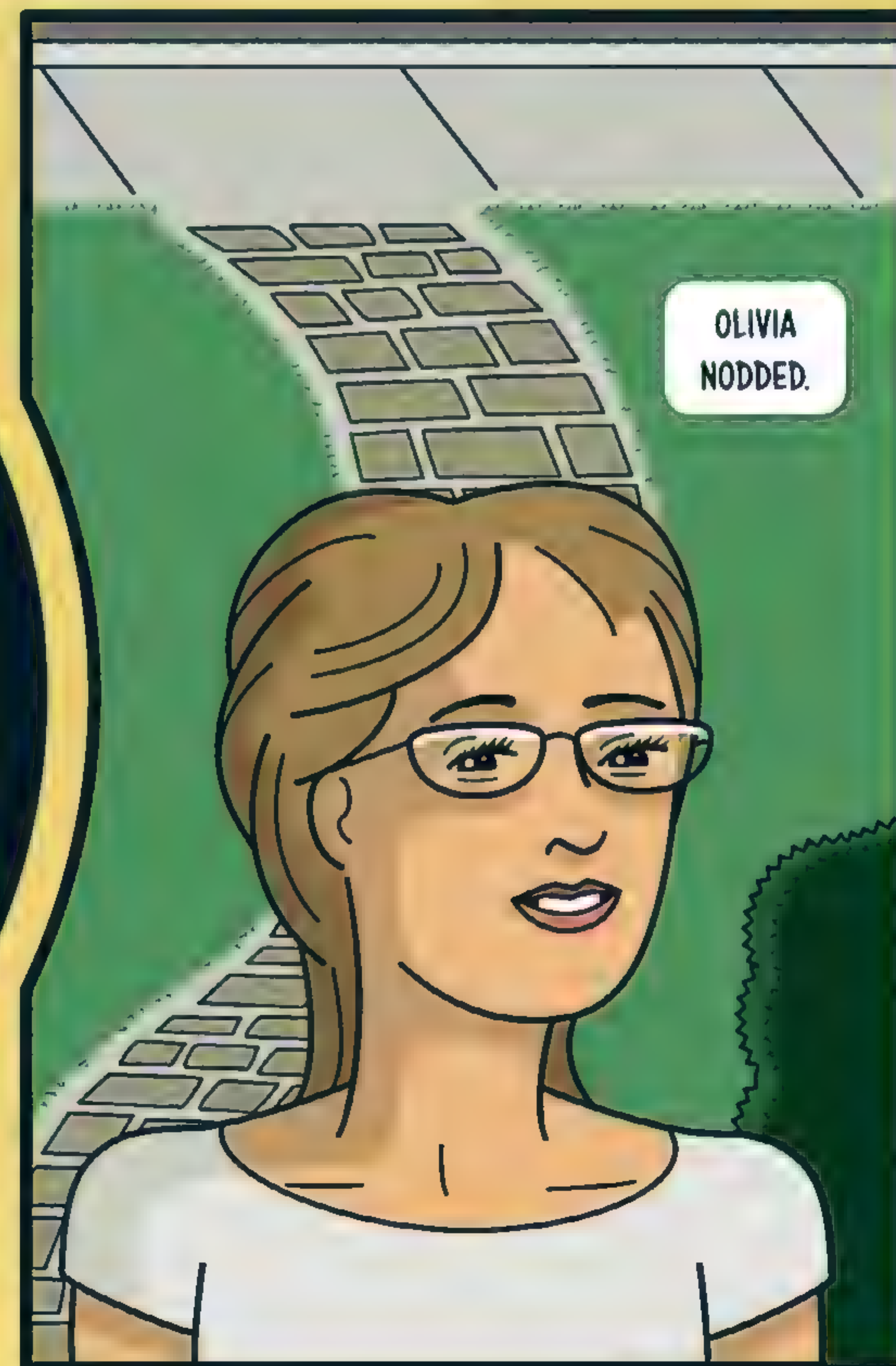


EDDIE...

IRIS READ  
THE LETTER  
A FEW TIMES.



DID YOU  
KEEP THE  
\$500 HE  
GAVE YOU?



OLIVIA  
NODDED.



SMART GIRL.

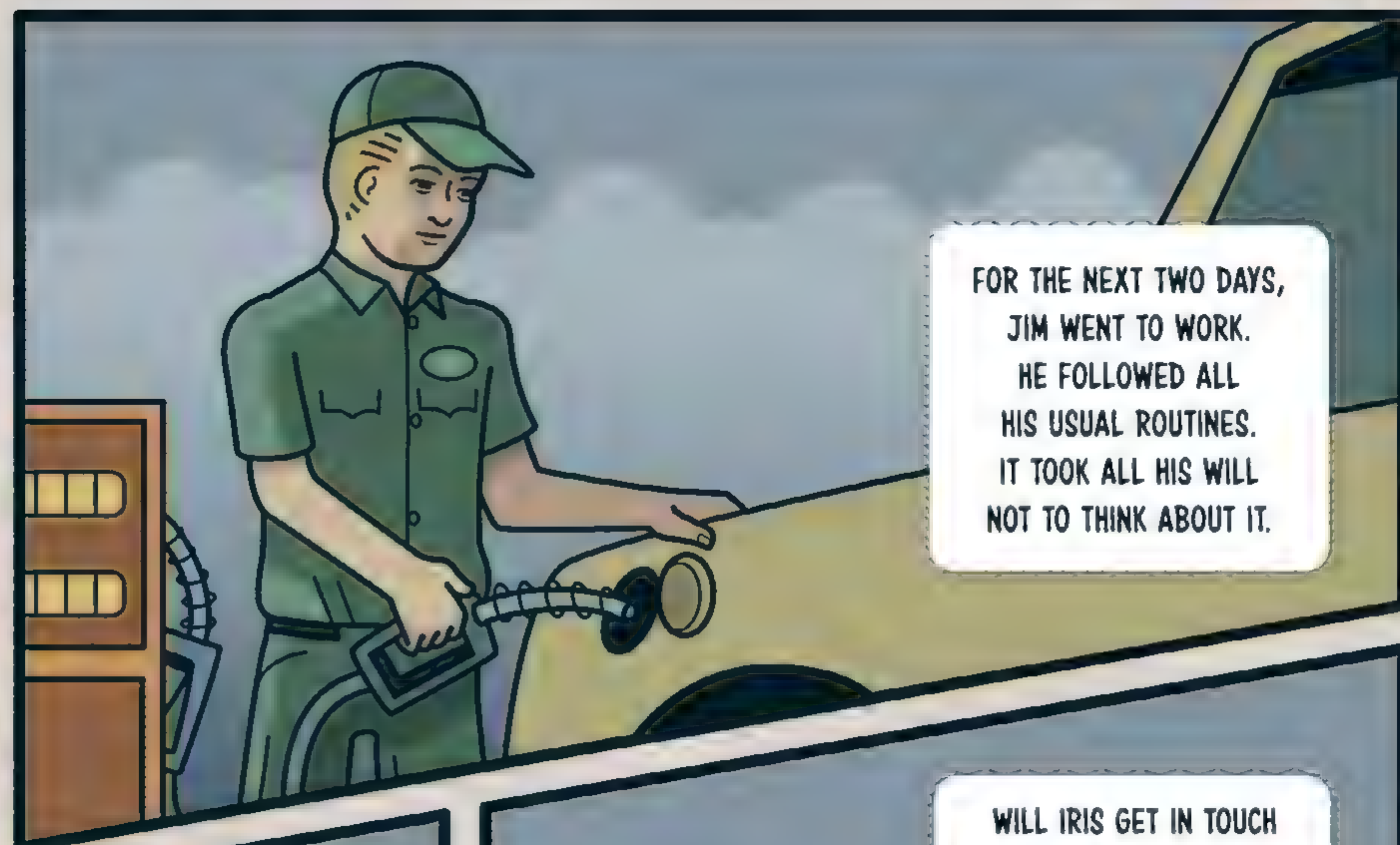
COME IN, YOU  
MUST BE THIRSTY.  
LET ME HAVE  
BRYAN GET US  
SOMETHING COOL  
TO DRINK.

OH, BRY-AN,  
WE'RE GOING  
TO NEED  
SOME DRINKS  
IN THE  
LIBRARY.

SHE LOOKED  
AT OLIVIA  
AND SMILED  
AGAIN.

IRIS CLOSED THE  
DOOR BEHIND HER.





FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS,  
JIM WENT TO WORK.  
HE FOLLOWED ALL  
HIS USUAL ROUTINES.  
IT TOOK ALL HIS WILL  
NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.



FOR A DEAD  
PERSON, HE WAS  
ON AN EMOTIONAL  
ROLLER COASTER...



...HE WAS ANXIOUS  
WITH A STRONG  
SENSE OF BOTH  
EXPECTATION  
AND DREAD.



WILL IRIS GET IN TOUCH  
WITH EDDIE? OR WOULD SHE  
DO IT THROUGH OLIVIA?



DING!

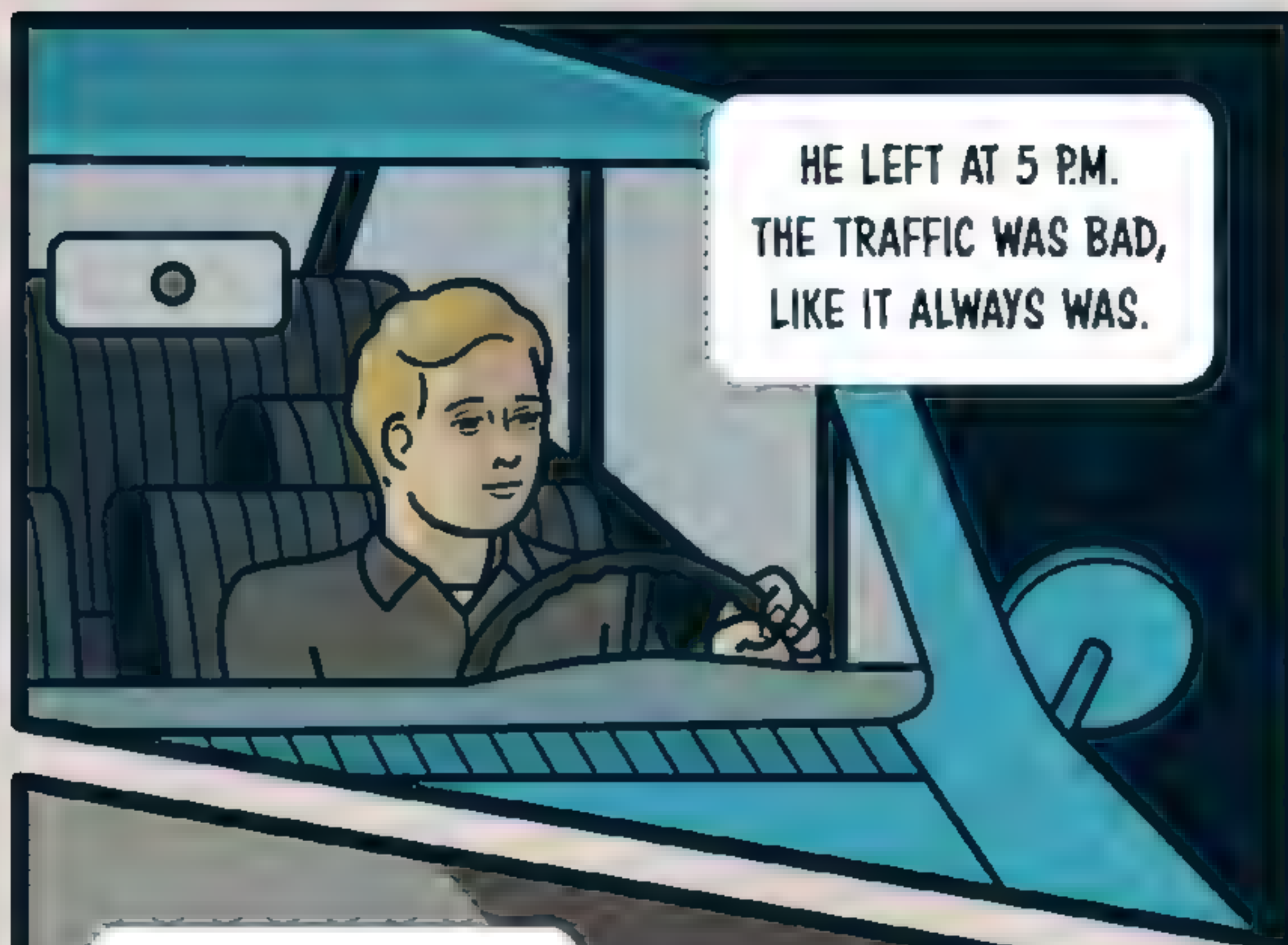
THAT'LL BE  
SEVEN DOLLARS,  
MISTER.



WE'LL BE  
BY YOUR  
PLACE  
AT 8 P.M.  
BE THERE.

RAYMOND  
LOOKED UP  
AT JIM, A  
SMIRK ON  
HIS FACE.





HE LEFT AT 5 P.M.  
THE TRAFFIC WAS BAD,  
LIKE IT ALWAYS WAS.



HE GOT A PACK  
OF CIGARETTES.

NO PAPER  
TONIGHT?  
GOING OUT?



YEAH. I'M  
GOING OUT.



HE KNEW HE HAD  
NO CHOICE. RAYMOND  
AND EDDIE WOULD  
PICK HIM UP AT EIGHT  
AND THERE'D BE  
ANOTHER SÉANCE...

...MAYBE AT THE SAME HOUSE,  
MAYBE SOMEWHERE ELSE.  
IT WAS A DANGEROUS LINE  
OF WORK IN THE A.I. AND  
YOU HAD TO BE CAREFUL...

...BECAUSE ANY KIND OF  
SUPERNATURAL ENDEAVOR  
WAS SEVERELY PUNISHED.



JIM WALKED  
THROUGH THE  
LOBBY AND  
WENT UPSTAIRS.  
HE DIDN'T BOTHER  
WITH THE MAIL.



HE STUDIED THE SHADOW  
ON THE WALL AND THOUGHT  
ABOUT WHAT MIGHT  
HAPPEN TONIGHT.





THERE WAS A SYSTEM OF CONTROL IN THE A.L.: PAROLE OFFICERS, PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS, AND THE UBIQUITOUS POLICE. IF YOU BROKE THE RULES MAINTAINED BY THOSE BUREAUCRACIES, YOU WOULD INCUR THE WRATH OF THE STATE. AND THE STATE WAS ONE PERSON: HADES.

ESCAPE, ANY KIND OF ESCAPE, WAS WHAT THOSE SYSTEMS WERE IN PLACE TO PREVENT. TELEPATHY, MEDIUMS, TAROT READINGS, AND SÉANCES WERE THE SOCIAL SCOURGES IN THE A.L. THAT ITCH TO GET BACK IN TOUCH, TO BE CLOSE TO THE LIVING AGAIN, SO CLOSE YOU COULD SMELL THEM? STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.



THE CRIMINAL OUTFITS THAT SPRANG UP TO PROVIDE THESE SERVICES? THEY WERE HUNTED DOWN RELENTLESSLY.



THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY PERSISTED. THERE WERE ALWAYS PEOPLE WHO WOULD PAY HANDSOMELY FOR THOSE SERVICES.



PEOPLE LIKE EDDIE.



BUT THERE WAS A HITCH.  
YOU COULDN'T JUST ATTEND A  
SÉANCE AND GET BACK IN TOUCH  
WITH YOUR WIFE AND KIDS. YOU  
HAD TO GO THROUGH SOMEONE.  
AND NOT THE MEDIUM, WHO LED  
THE SÉANCE, EITHER. THEY WERE  
ONLY THERE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT.  
IT HAD TO BE SOMEONE IN THE  
CIRCLE WHO HAD A CONNECTION.



THE SAME WAS TRUE FOR THE  
OTHER SIDE. A RANDOM PERSON,  
LIVING THEIR LIFE, NOT KNOWING THEY  
WERE A CONNECTION POINT TO THE A.L.  
THEY WERE A VALUABLE COMMODITY,  
TOO, AND SADLY, THEY WERE THE ONES  
WITH THE MOST TO LOSE.



OLIVIA JUST HAPPENED  
TO BE THE FIRST ONE  
HE SAW.

YOU WERE ALSO  
A COMMODITY  
THAT COULD BE  
BOUGHT AND SOLD.

IT WAS LIKE HAVING  
A RARE BLOOD TYPE.  
YOU WERE PRECIOUS.  
A CONNECTION POINT  
BETWEEN ONE WORLD  
AND ANOTHER.



THERE WAS  
NO CHANCE  
TO WARN HER.



HOW MANY TIMES  
HAD EDDIE DONE  
THIS BEFORE?



AND WHAT  
HAPPENED TO THE  
THE OTHERS? IT  
MUST NOT HAVE  
GONE WELL OR  
EDDIE WOULDN'T  
HAVE COME  
FOR HIM.



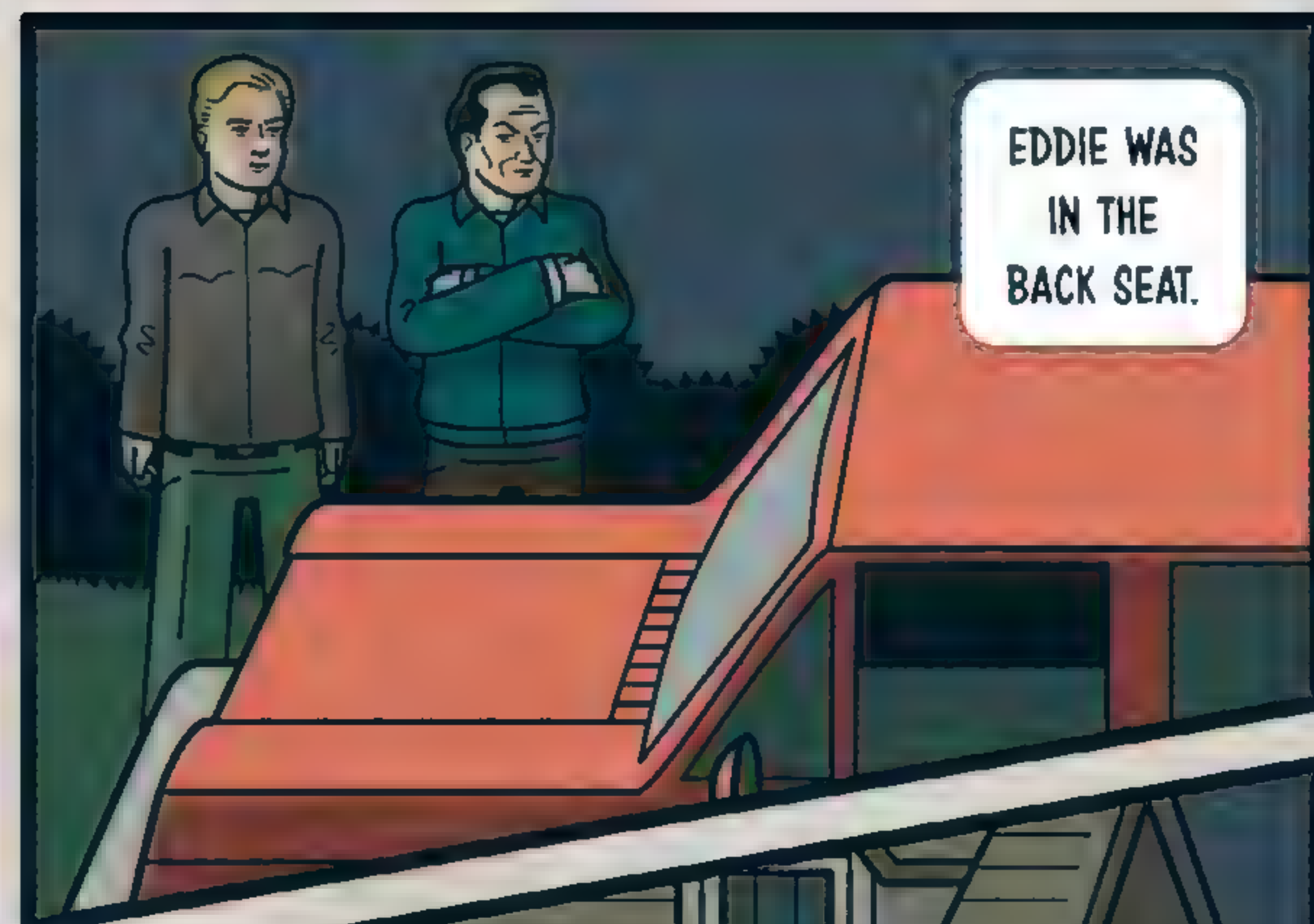




THERE WAS A QUIET KNOCK. SIGHING SLIGHTLY, HE STUBBED OUT HIS CIGARETTE, GOT UP, AND OPENED THE DOOR.



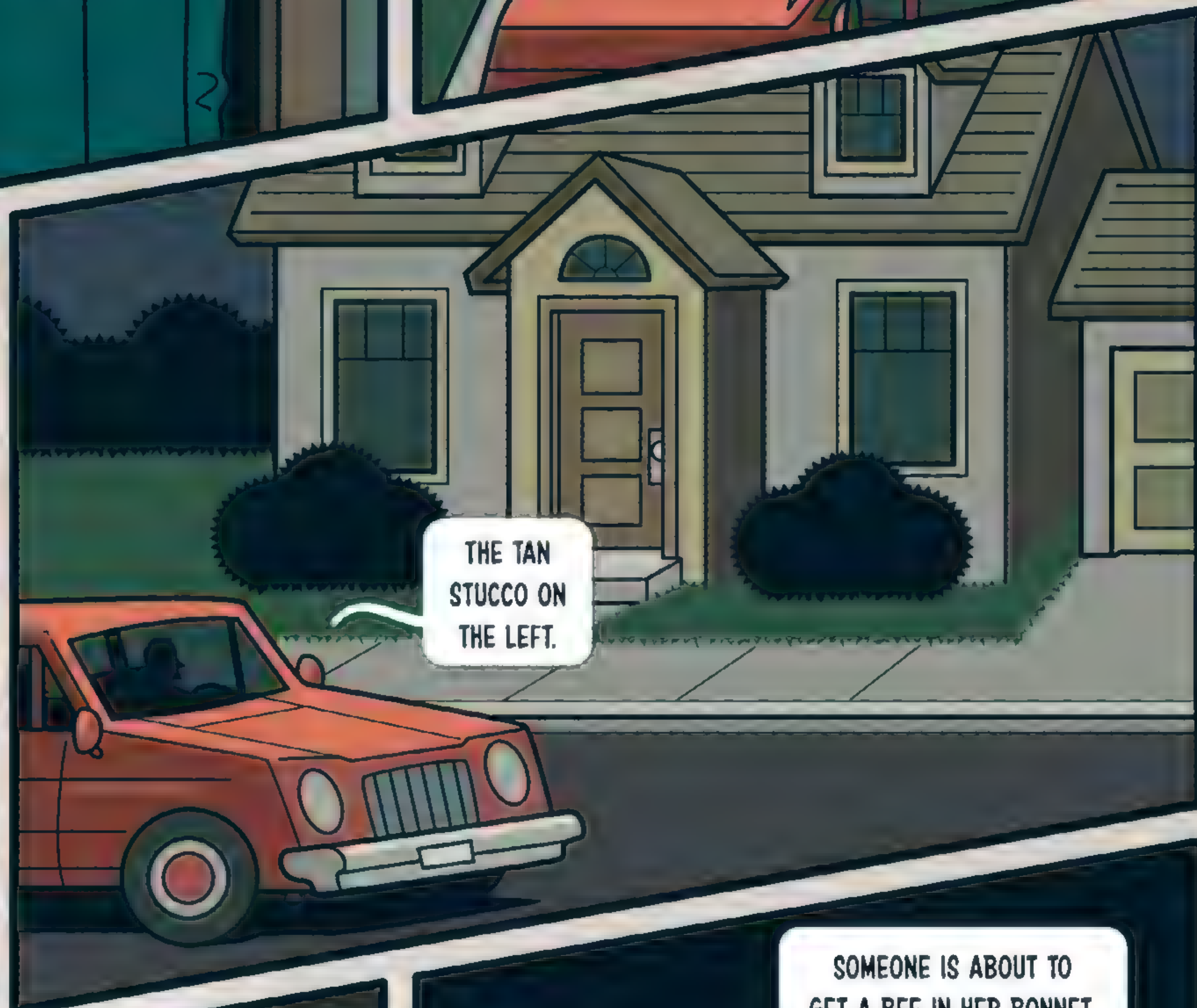
IT WAS RAYMOND.



EDDIE WAS IN THE BACK SEAT.



IN AN HOUR OR SO, THEY WERE ON A QUIET STREET IN WEST HOLLYWOOD.



THE TAN STUCCO ON THE LEFT.



LINDA APPEARED AT A SIDE DOOR. SHE HELD IT OPEN FOR THEM AND THEN QUICKLY PULLED IT SHUT.



EDDIE, ARE YOU SURE NO ONE FOLLOWED YOU?

DON'T GET A BEE IN YOUR BONNET, LINDA. WE SHOOK ANY TAILS.



SOMEONE IS ABOUT TO GET A BEE IN HER BONNET.





I'M STILL CRAZY ABOUT HER. TRYING TO FORGET DOES ME NO GOOD. EVEN IF I CAN'T SEE HER, I MIGHT STILL HAVE...INFLUENCE.



RAYMOND AND LINDA EXCHANGED LOOKS.



THE ONLY LIGHT IN THE ROOM WAS FROM THE CANDLES AND THE SMALL GLASS BALL IN THE CENTER OF THE TABLE.



EDDIE HANDED JIM A HEAVY MANILA ENVELOPE.

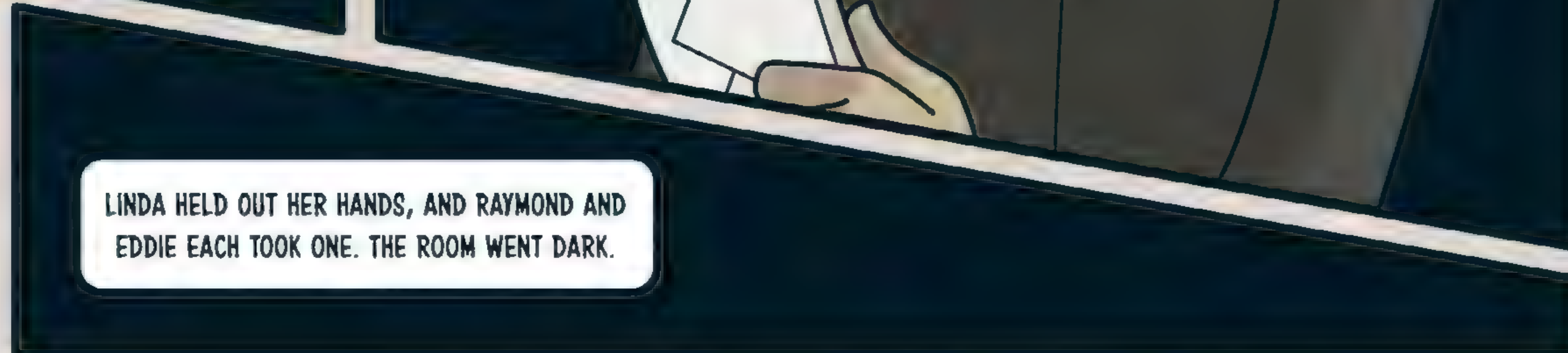
THIS GOES TO THE GIRL, JUST LIKE BEFORE.



ARE YOU SURE SHE'S GOING TO BE THERE?



OH, HE'S SURE ALL RIGHT. A LITTLE BEE TOLD HIM.

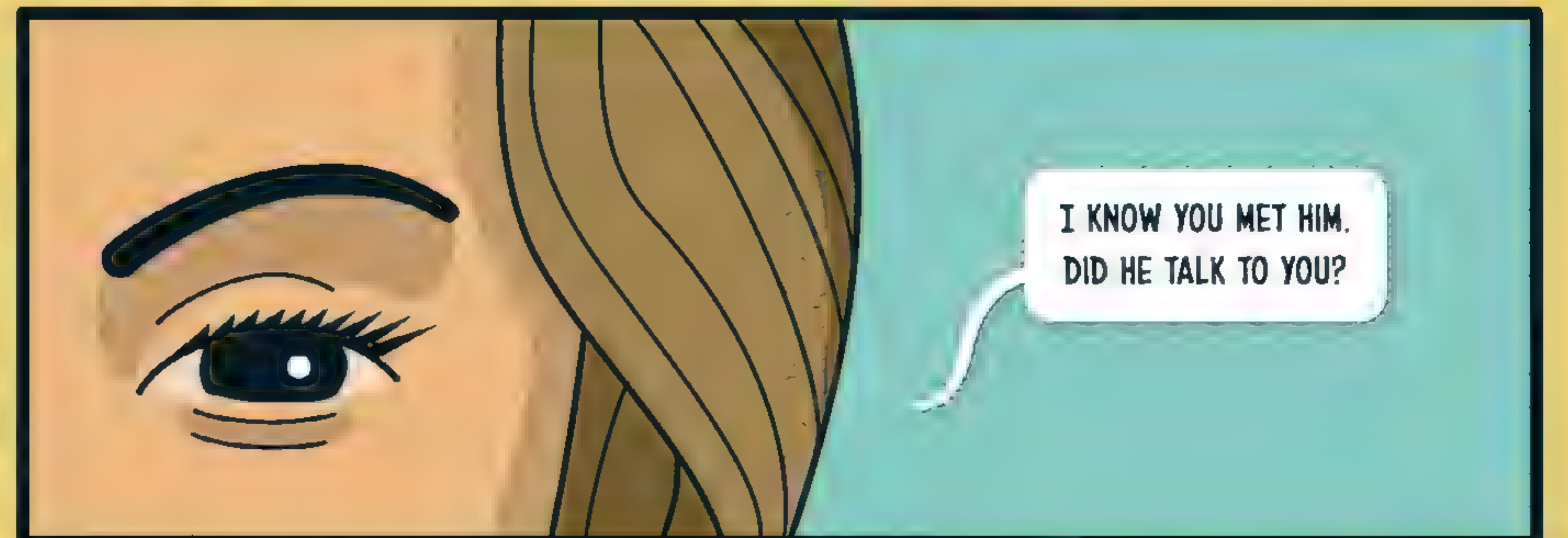
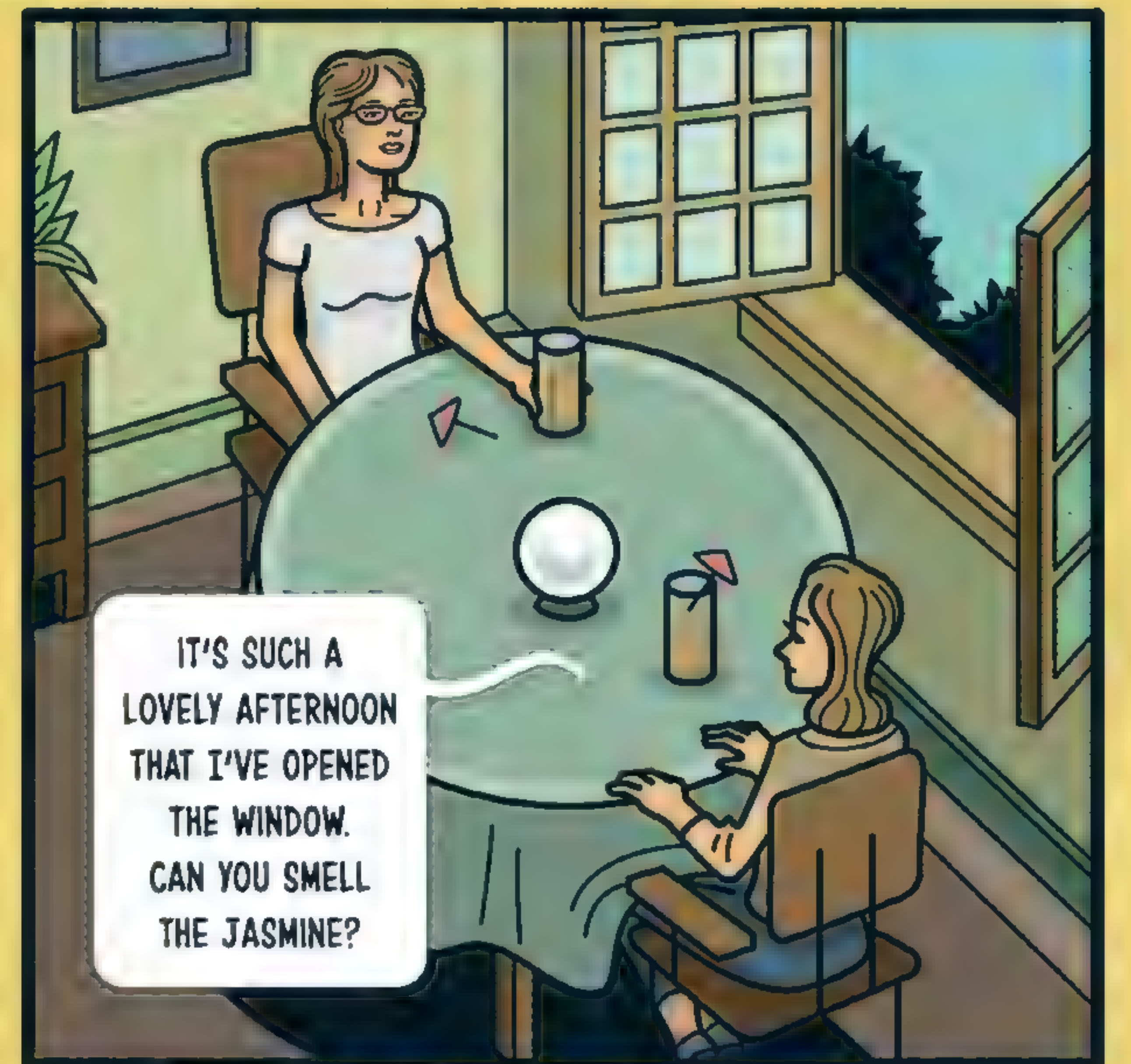


LINDA HELD OUT HER HANDS, AND RAYMOND AND EDDIE EACH TOOK ONE. THE ROOM WENT DARK.





# CHAPTER 9



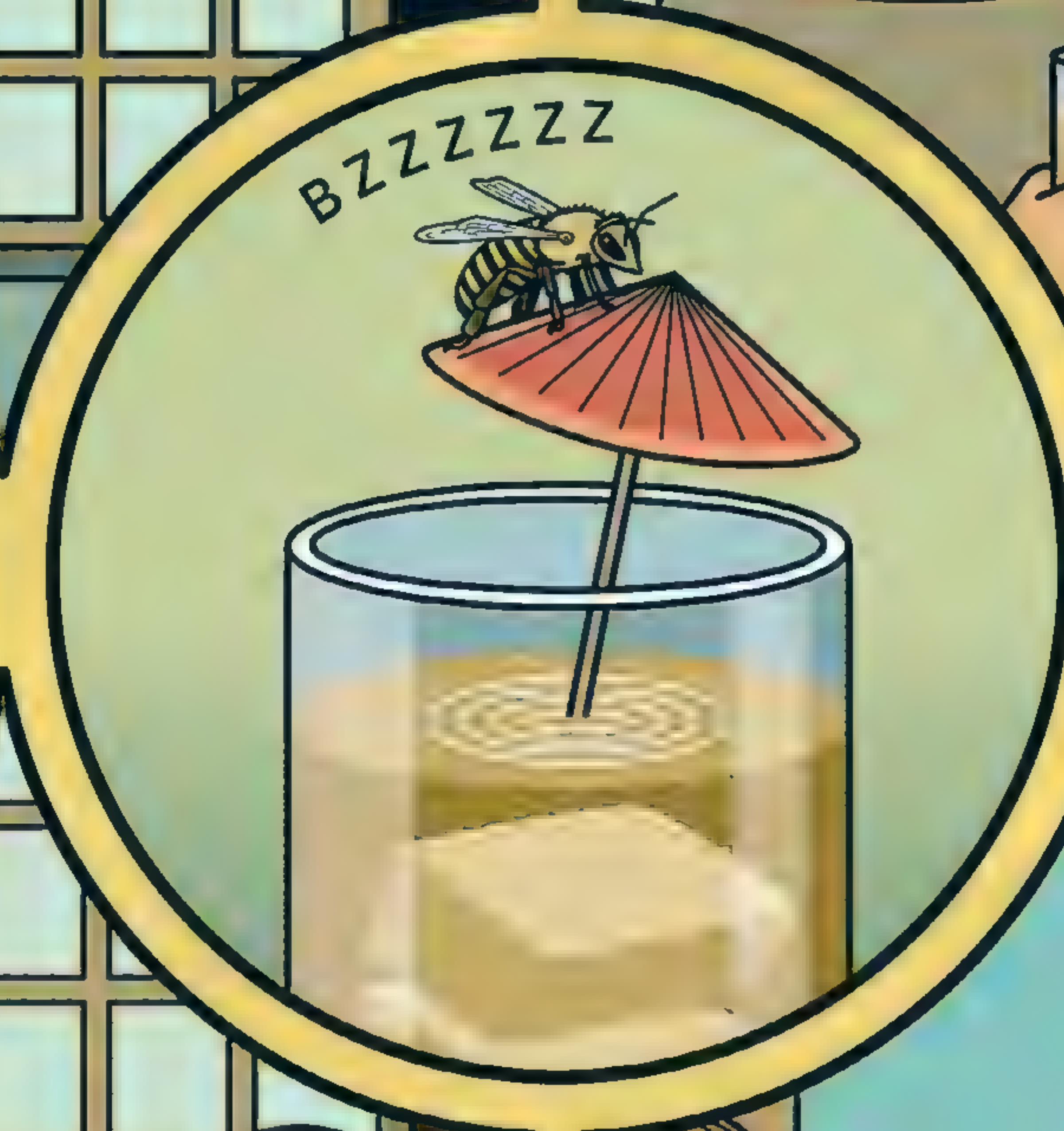




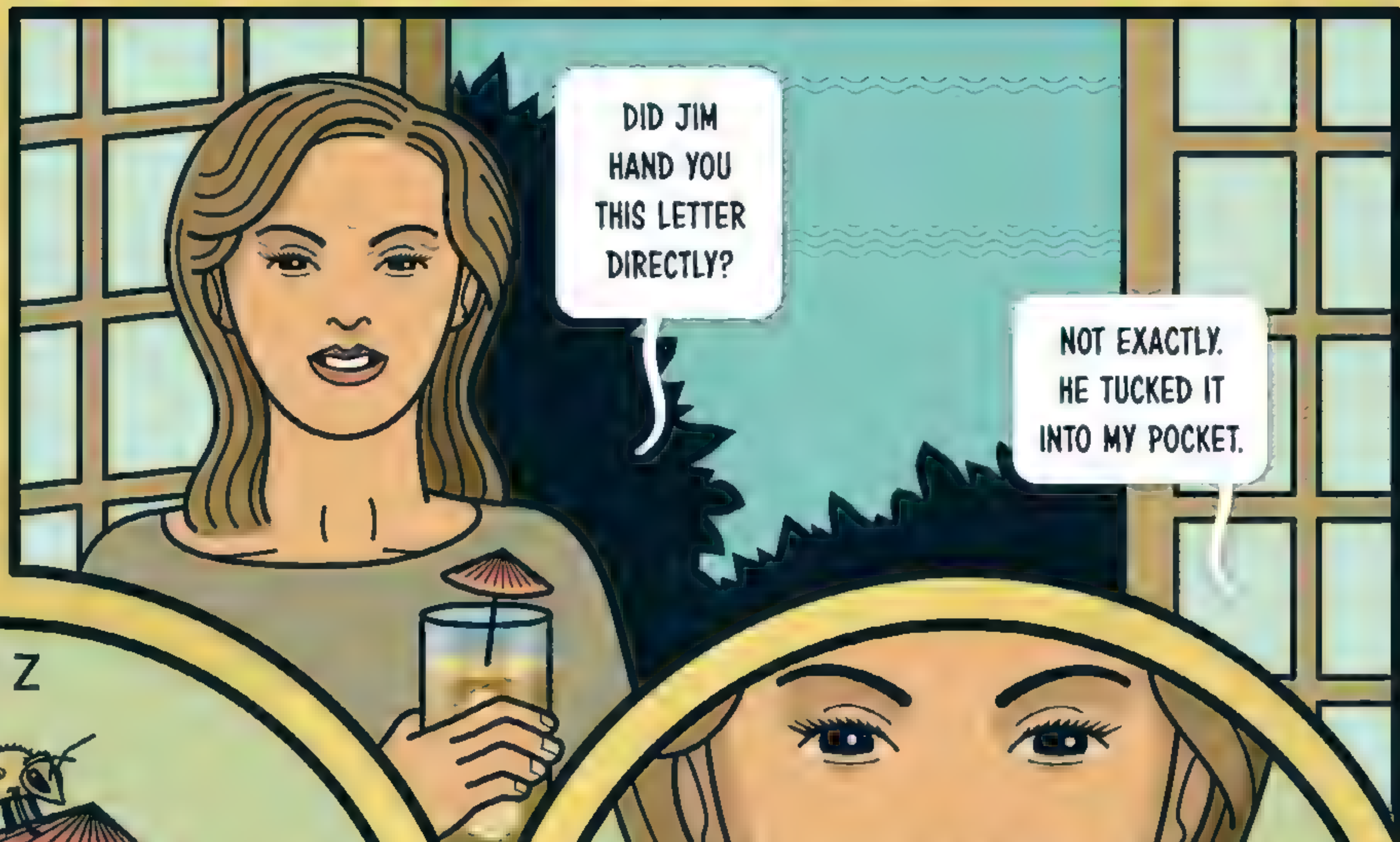
JIM WAS THERE IN THE PARK.  
HE WALKED ME BACK TO THE SPOT  
WHERE I WAS LYING ON THE GROUND.  
THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE AROUND,  
BUT THEY DIDN'T SEEM TO NOTICE US.



YOUR ATTACK WAS THE  
RESULT OF A BEE STING?



BZZZZZZ

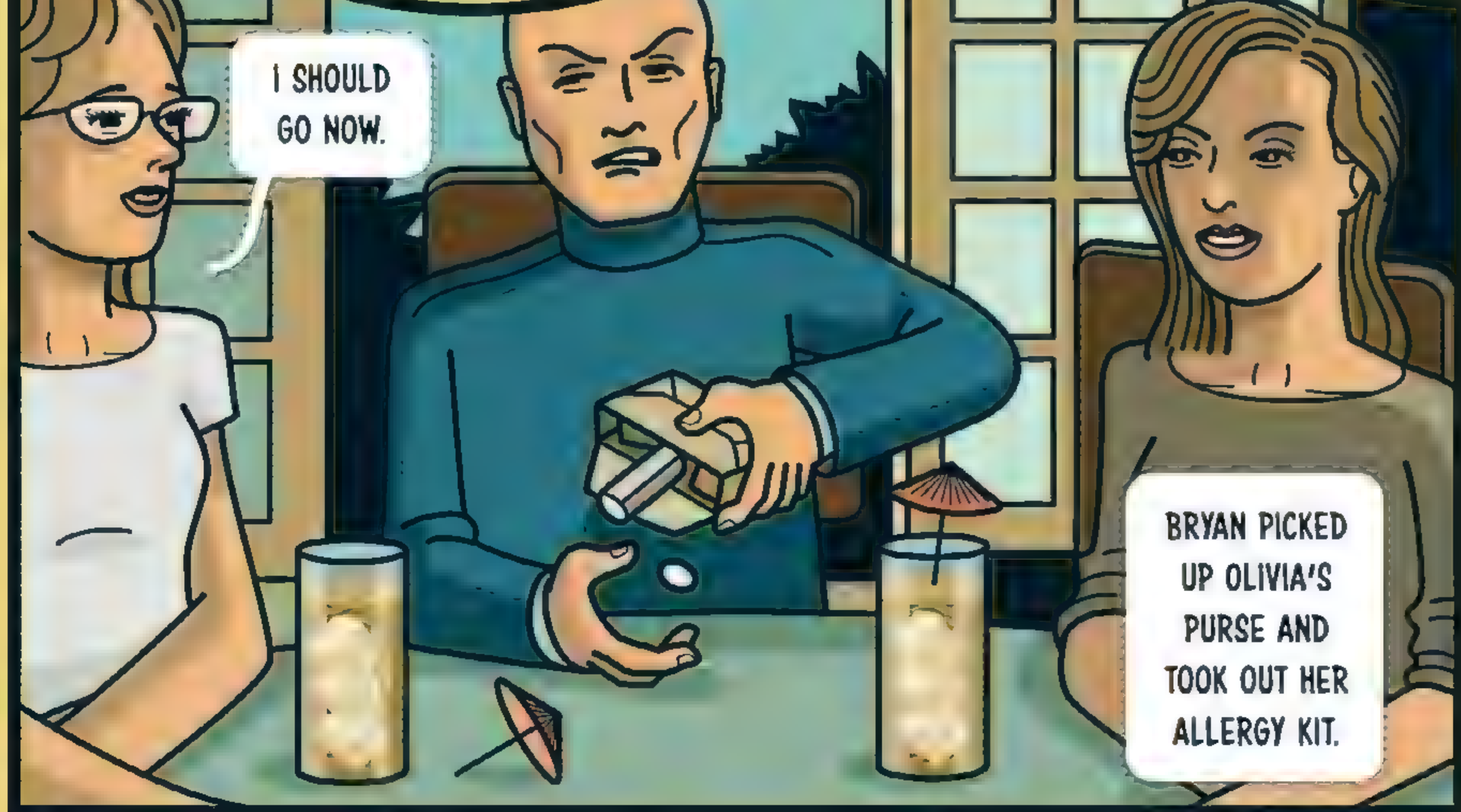


DID JIM  
HAND YOU  
THIS LETTER  
DIRECTLY?

NOT EXACTLY.  
HE TUCKED IT  
INTO MY POCKET.



IT'S REMARKABLE  
THAT SUCH A  
LITTLE THING  
CAN HAVE SUCH  
A BIG IMPACT.



I SHOULD  
GO NOW.

BRYAN PICKED  
UP OLIVIA'S  
PURSE AND  
TOOK OUT HER  
ALLERGY KIT.



WHY RUSH OFF,  
OLIVIA? IT'S  
SUCH A LOVELY  
AFTERNOON...





IRIS PICKED UP THE BEE AND LEANED FORWARD.

BRYAN TOOK HOLD OF OLIVIA'S WRISTS AND HELD HER ARMS STEADY.

BZZZZZZ



THE AGITATED INSECT BUZZED LOUDLY.

SHE LOWERED THE BEE ONTO OLIVIA'S FOREARM. IT PROMPTLY JABBED ITS STINGER INTO HER SKIN.

BZZZZZZZZZZ

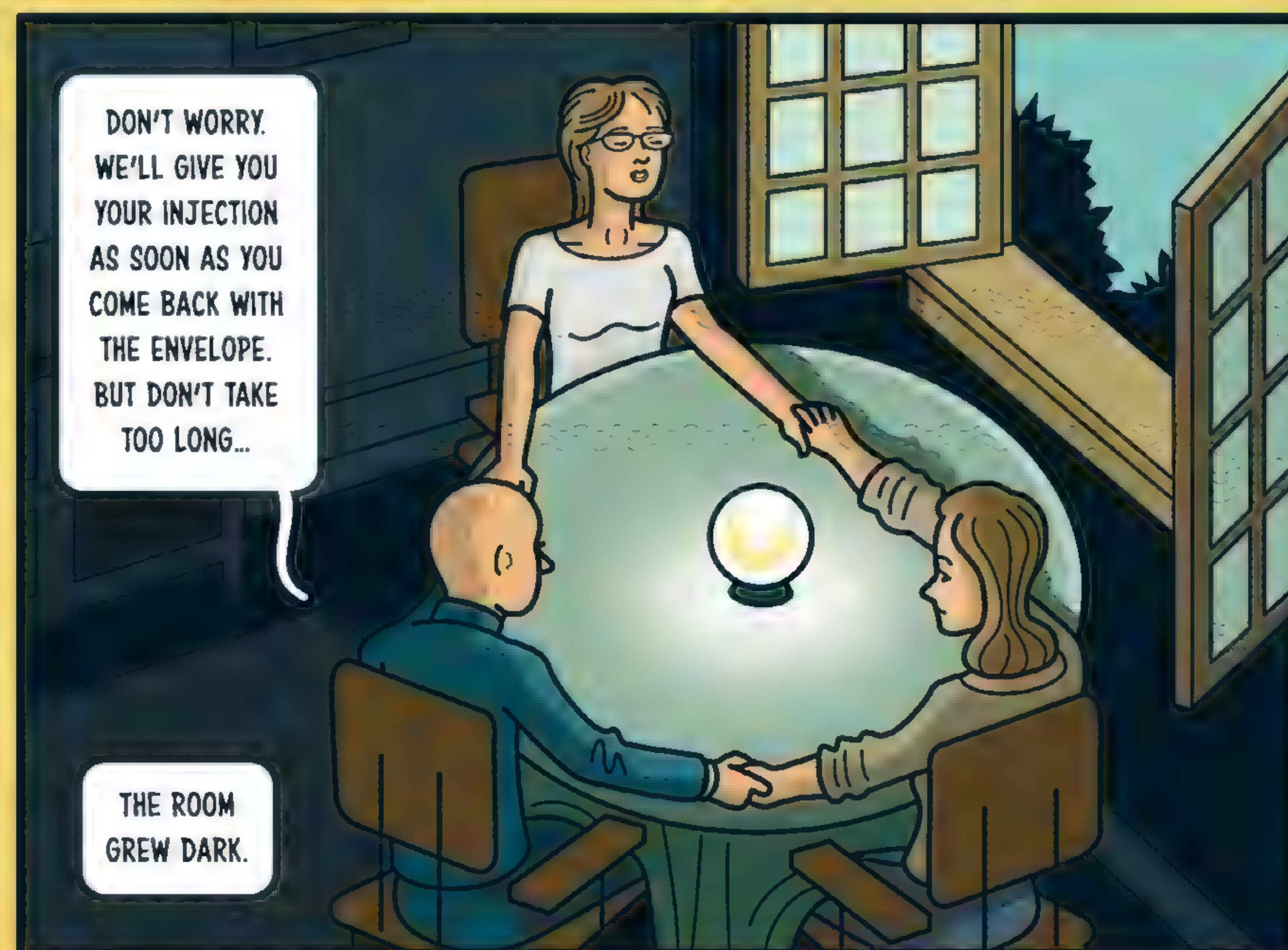


OLIVIA GASPED. SHE WAS TOO SHOCKED BY WHAT HAD JUST HAPPENED TO MAKE MORE OF A NOISE.



YOU CAN SCREAM IF YOU'D LIKE, BUT NO ONE WILL HEAR YOU.

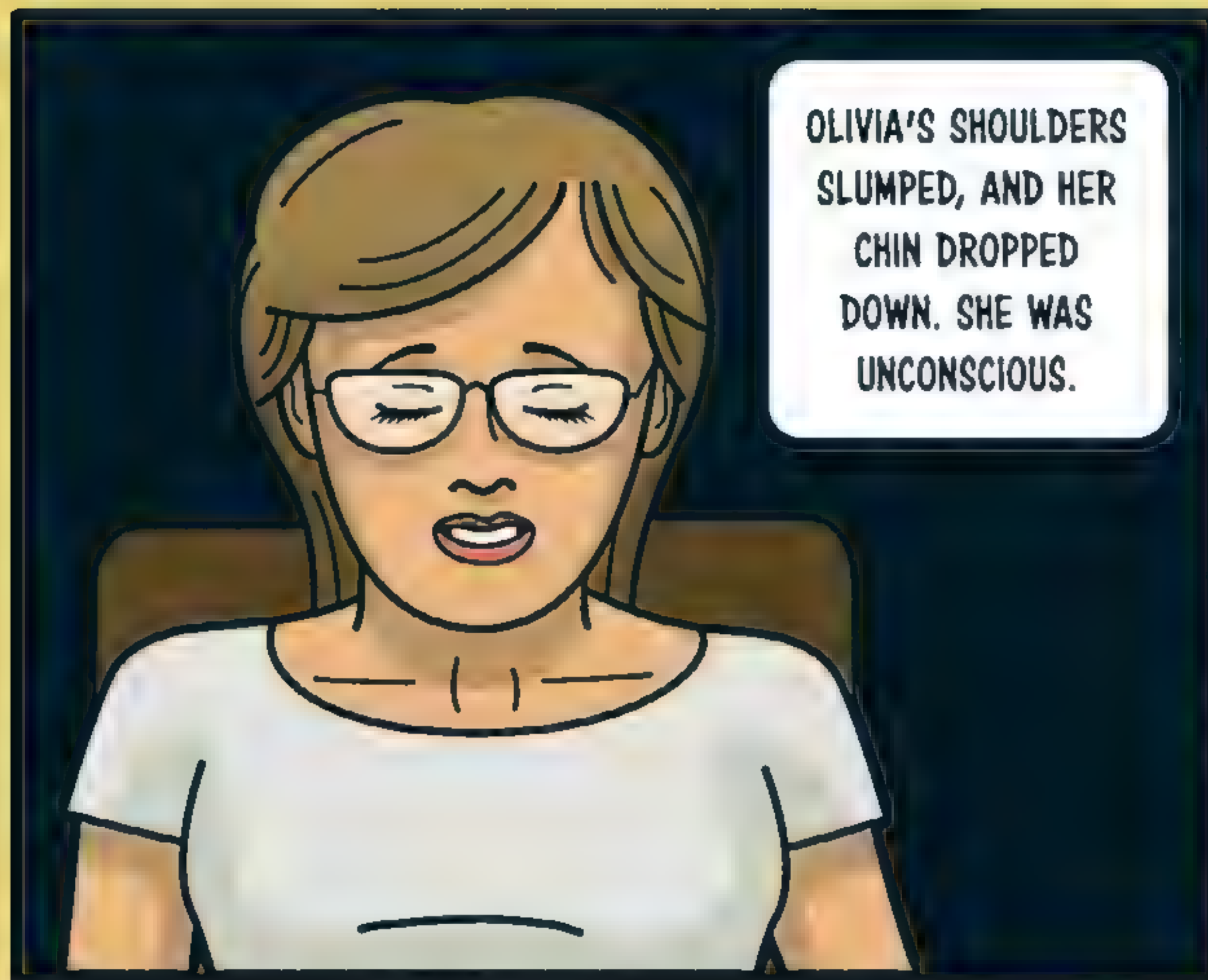
YOU'RE GOING BACK, MY DEAR. BACK TO MEET JIM. HE'LL HAVE ANOTHER ENVELOPE. YOU NEED TO GET IT AND BRING IT TO ME.



DON'T WORRY. WE'LL GIVE YOU YOUR INJECTION AS SOON AS YOU COME BACK WITH THE ENVELOPE. BUT DON'T TAKE TOO LONG...

THE ROOM GREW DARK.

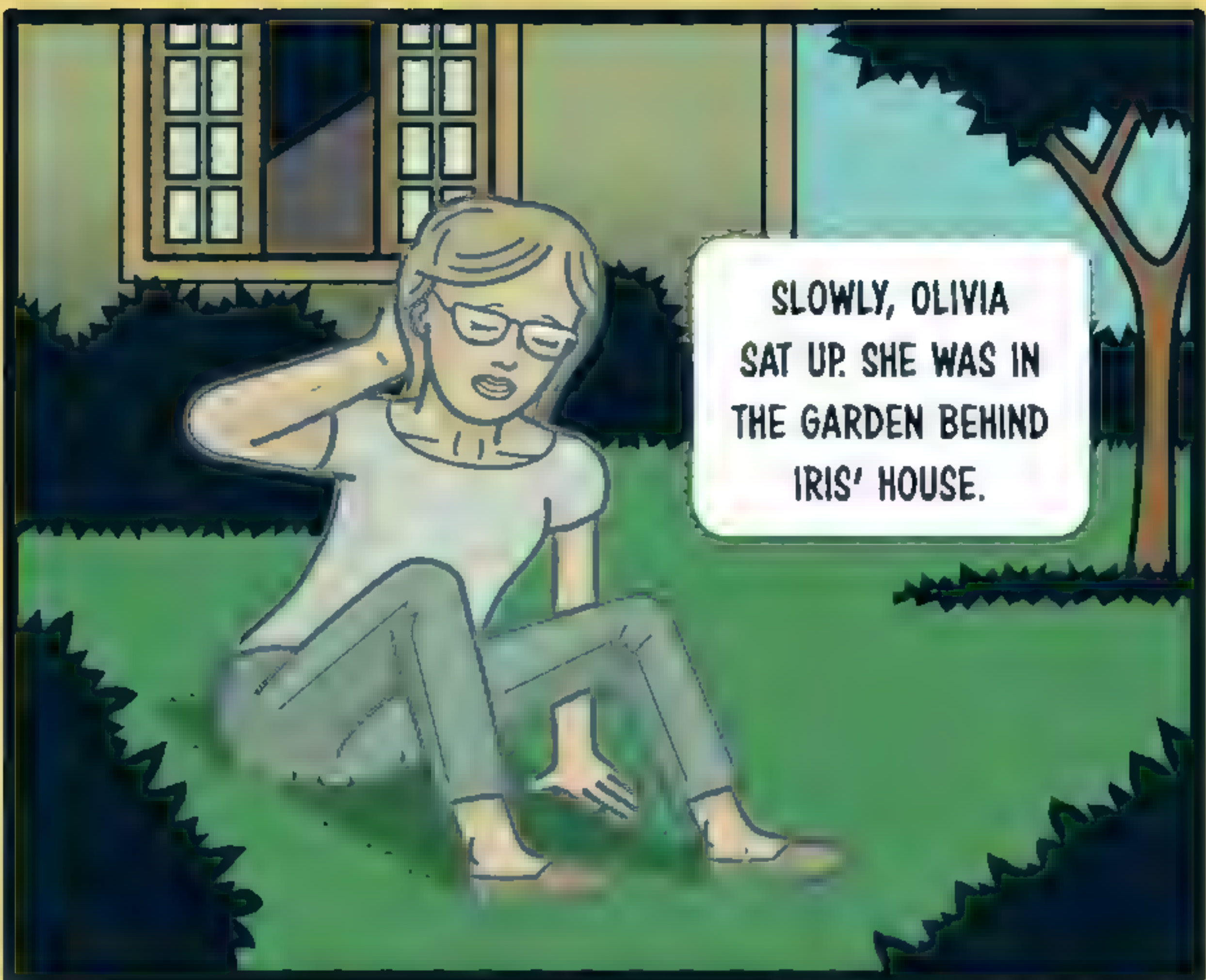




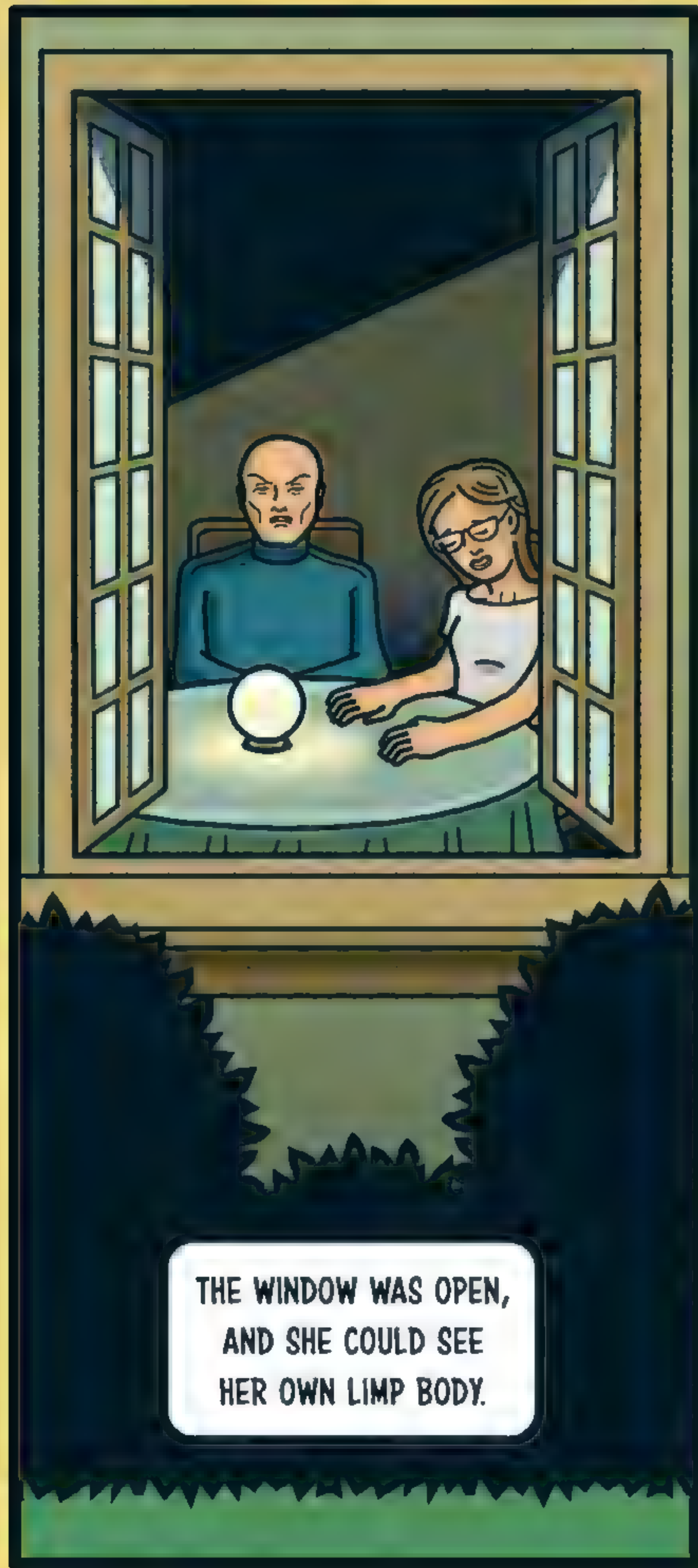
OLIVIA'S SHOULDERS  
SLUMPED, AND HER  
CHIN DROPPED  
DOWN. SHE WAS  
UNCONSCIOUS.



THE CRYSTAL BALL  
ON THE TABLE  
BRIGHTENED  
AND DIMMED.



SLOWLY, OLIVIA  
SAT UP. SHE WAS IN  
THE GARDEN BEHIND  
IRIS' HOUSE.



THE WINDOW WAS OPEN,  
AND SHE COULD SEE  
HER OWN LIMP BODY.



EVERYTHING WAS KIND  
OF HAZY AND A  
LITTLE INDISTINCT.

OFF IN THE DISTANCE  
SHE HEARD A SOUND.



IT WAS HER NAME,  
OVER AND OVER,  
BUT FAR AWAY.

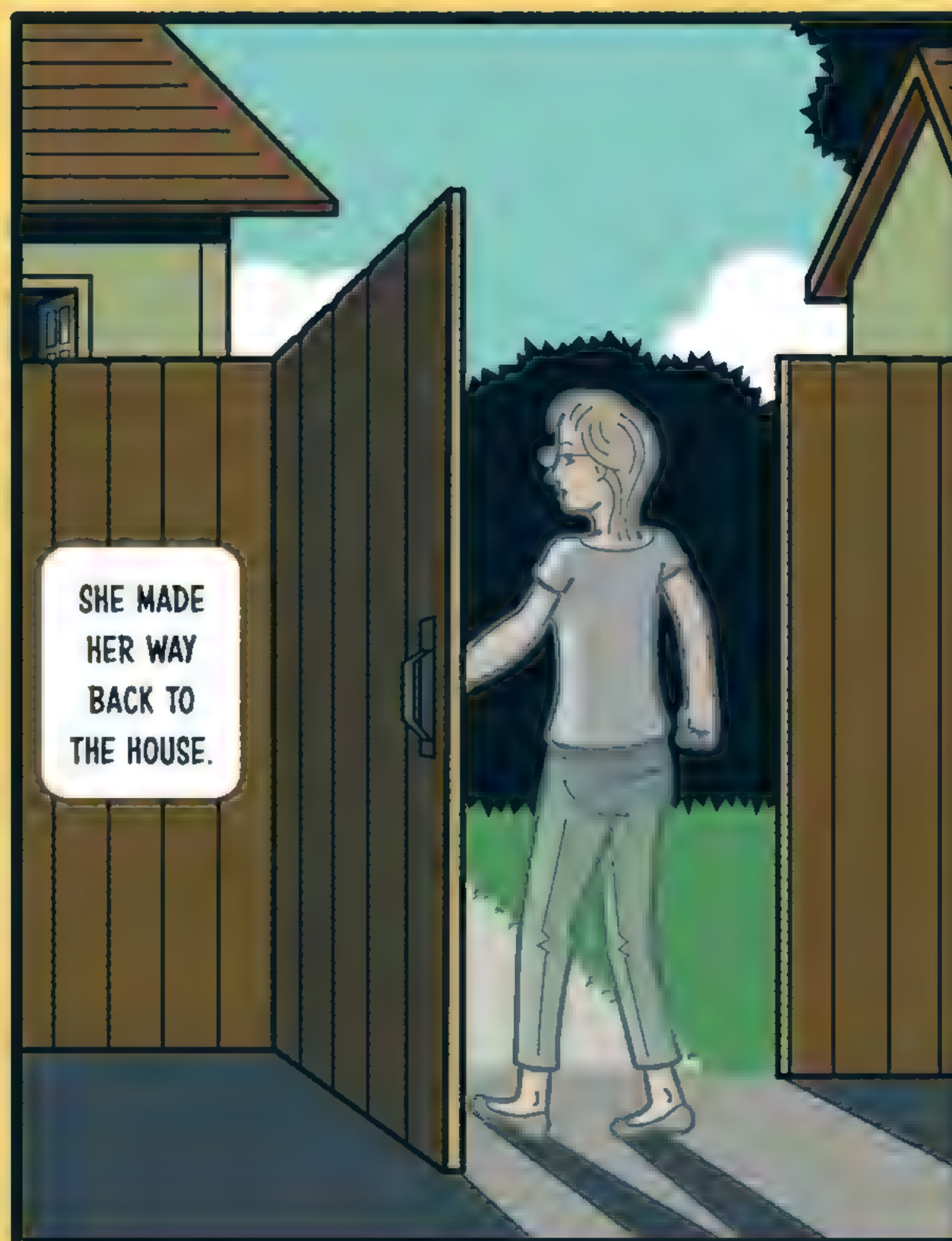
THE PROPERTY FENCE  
BACKED UP TO A DENSE  
TANGLE OF SCRUB BRUSH.



...O-LIV-IA, OLIV-IA.  
CAN YOU HEAR ME?

JIM WAS PERCHED  
ON A ROCK,  
LOOKING DOWN  
AT HER.







BRYAN HELD UP  
OLIVIA'S ARM  
AND JABBED  
THE NEEDLE IN...



...WHILE IRIS REACHED OVER  
AND TOOK THE ENVELOPE  
FROM OLIVIA'S HAND.



SHE TORE OPEN  
THE ENVELOPE  
AND SPILLED  
OUT THE MONEY.



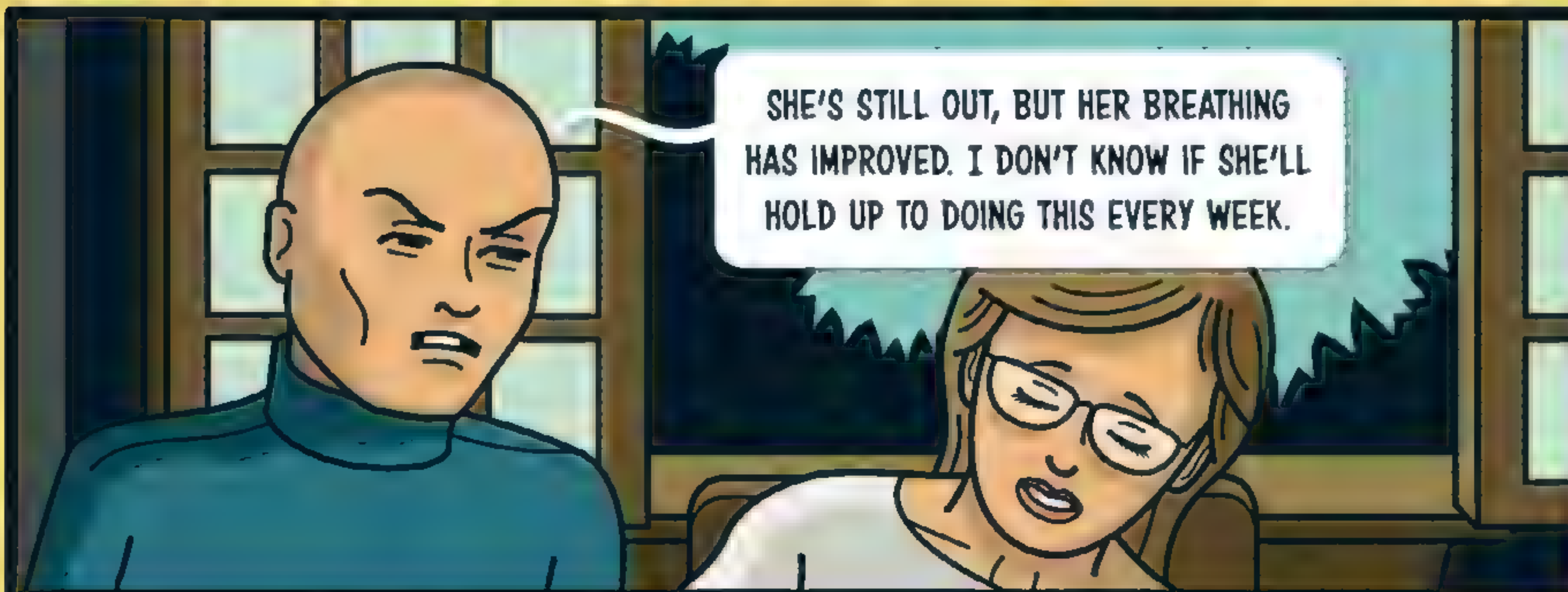
THERE WAS  
ALSO A NOTE  
FROM EDDIE...



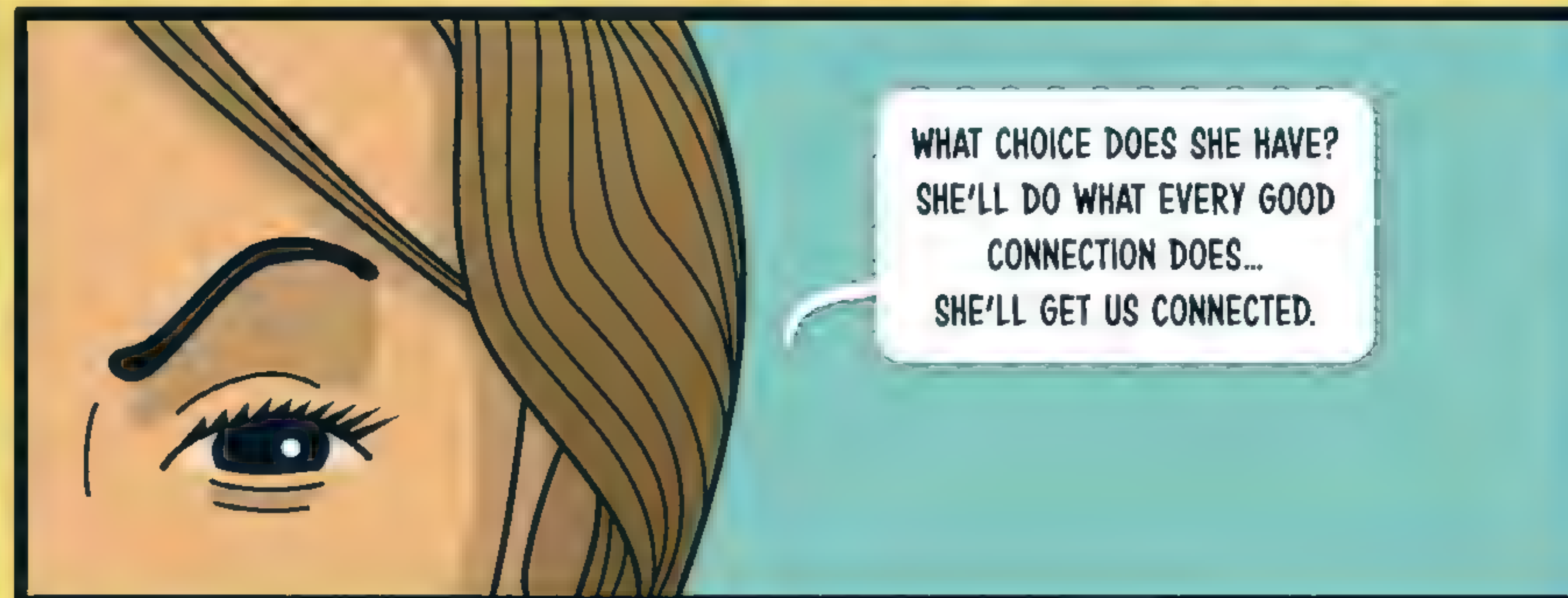
...WHICH SHE  
SLOWLY TORE  
INTO PIECES.



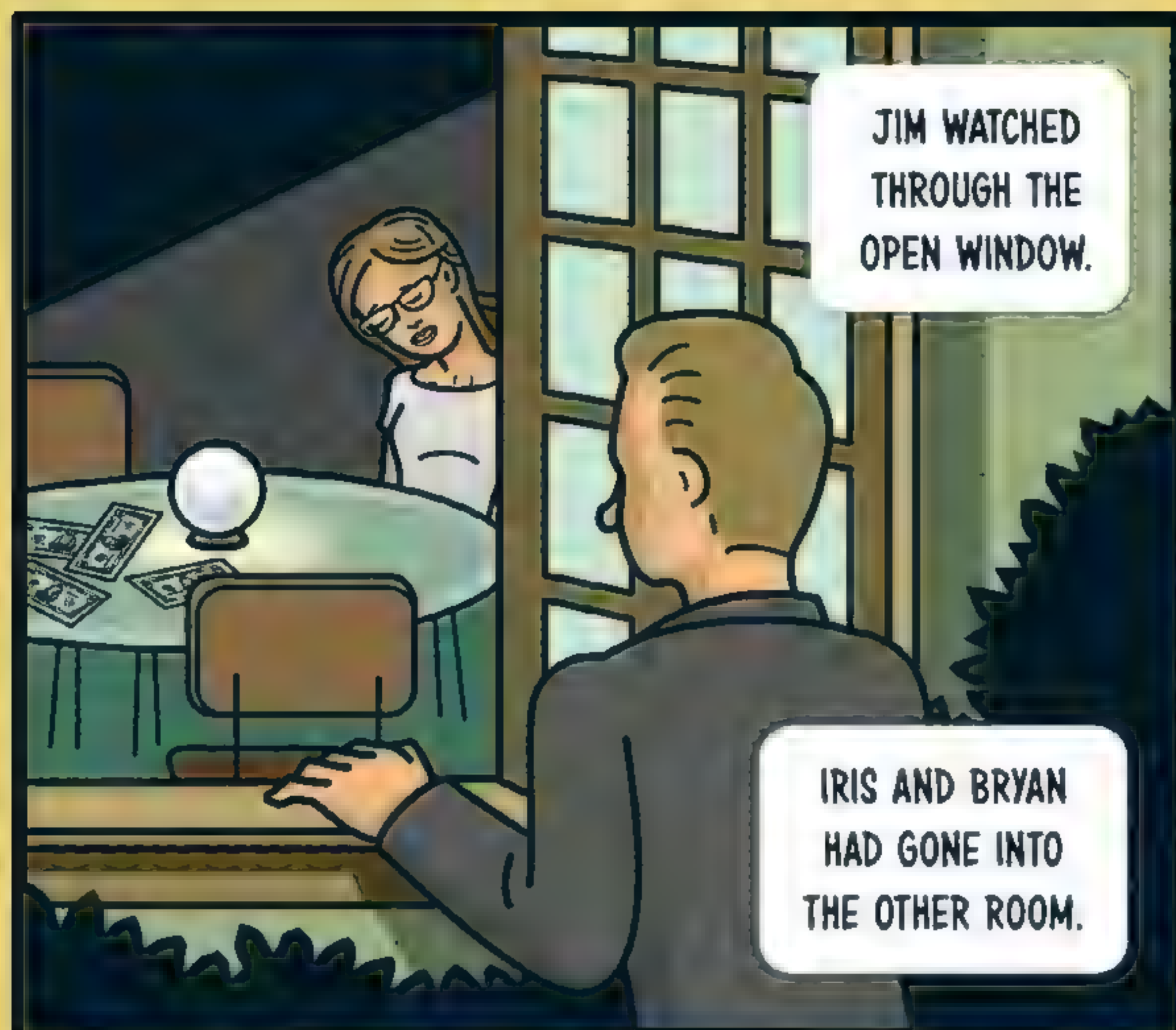
SHE'S STILL OUT, BUT HER BREATHING  
HAS IMPROVED. I DON'T KNOW IF SHE'LL  
HOLD UP TO DOING THIS EVERY WEEK.



WHAT CHOICE DOES SHE HAVE?  
SHE'LL DO WHAT EVERY GOOD  
CONNECTION DOES...  
SHE'LL GET US CONNECTED.

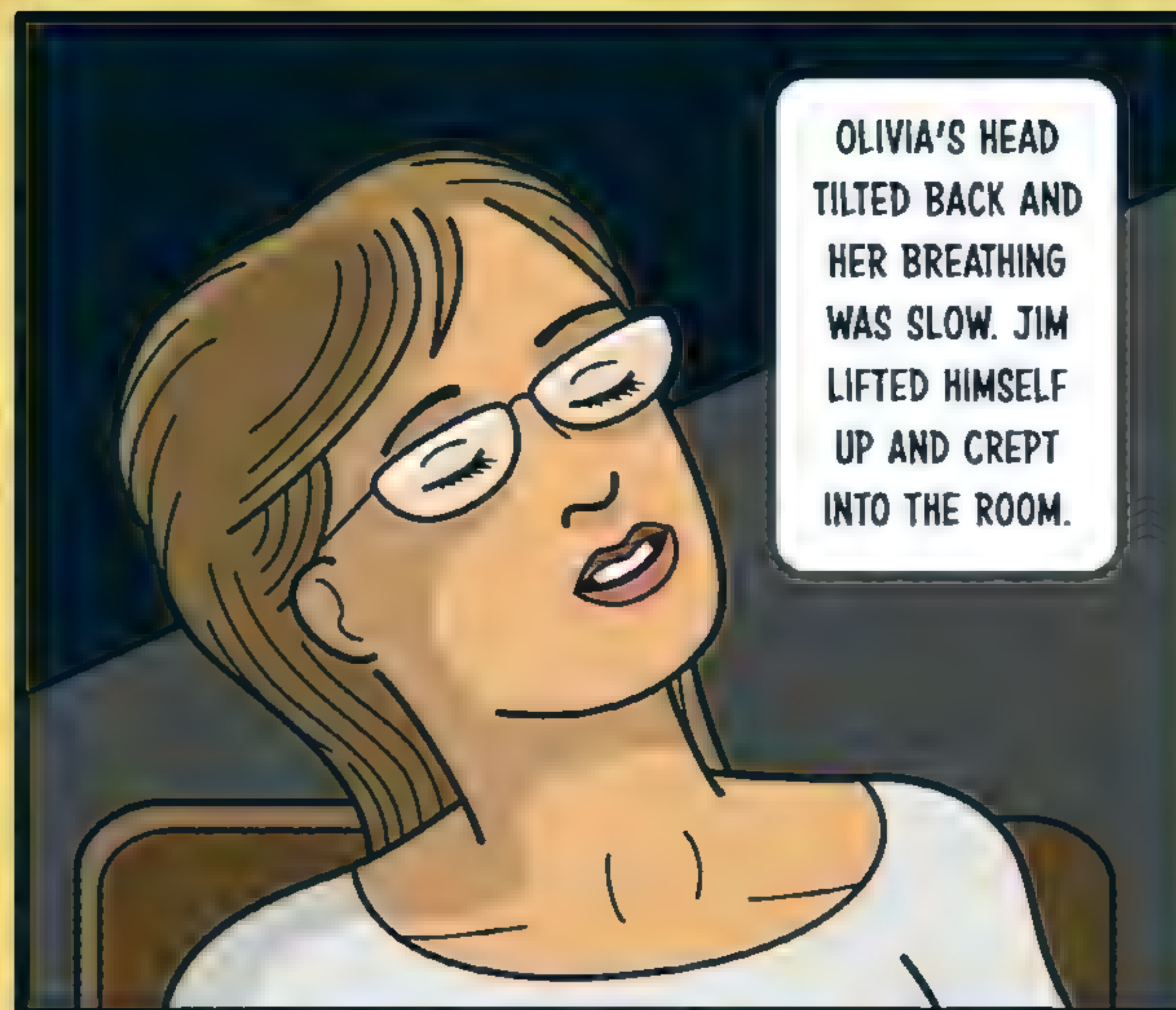




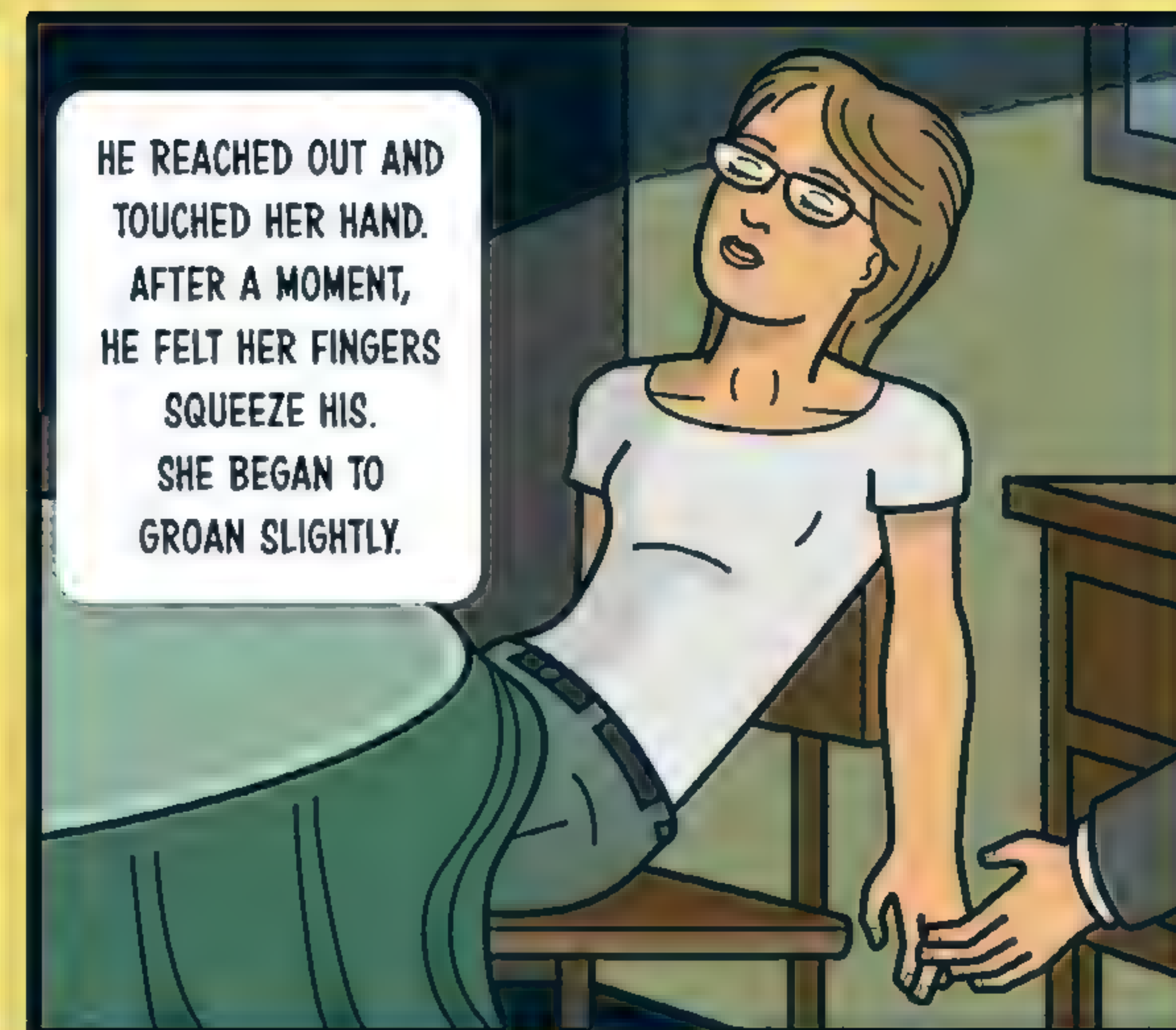


JIM WATCHED THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW.

IRIS AND BRYAN HAD GONE INTO THE OTHER ROOM.



OLIVIA'S HEAD TILTED BACK AND HER BREATHING WAS SLOW. JIM LIFTED HIMSELF UP AND CREPT INTO THE ROOM.



HE REACHED OUT AND TOUCHED HER HAND. AFTER A MOMENT, HE FELT HER FINGERS SQUEEZE HIS. SHE BEGAN TO GROAN SLIGHTLY.



JIM HEARD IRIS AND BRYAN COMING BACK DOWN THE HALL.

HE SLIPPED OUT THE WINDOW.

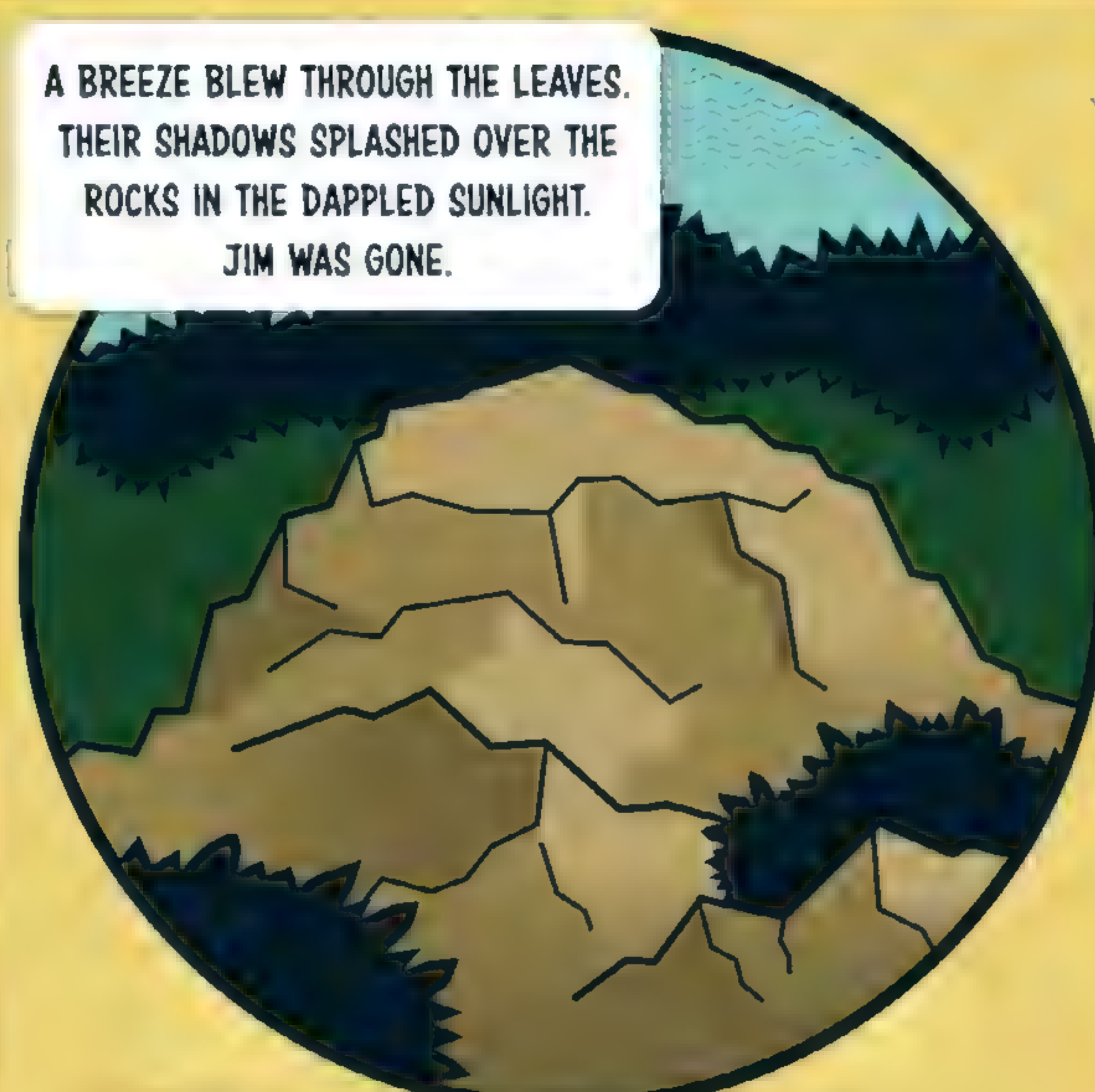


SHE'S COMING AROUND NOW.

YOU DID FINE, OLIVIA. EVERYTHING WENT AS PLANNED.



JIM MADE HIS WAY TO THE DOOR IN THE BACK OF THE GARDEN.



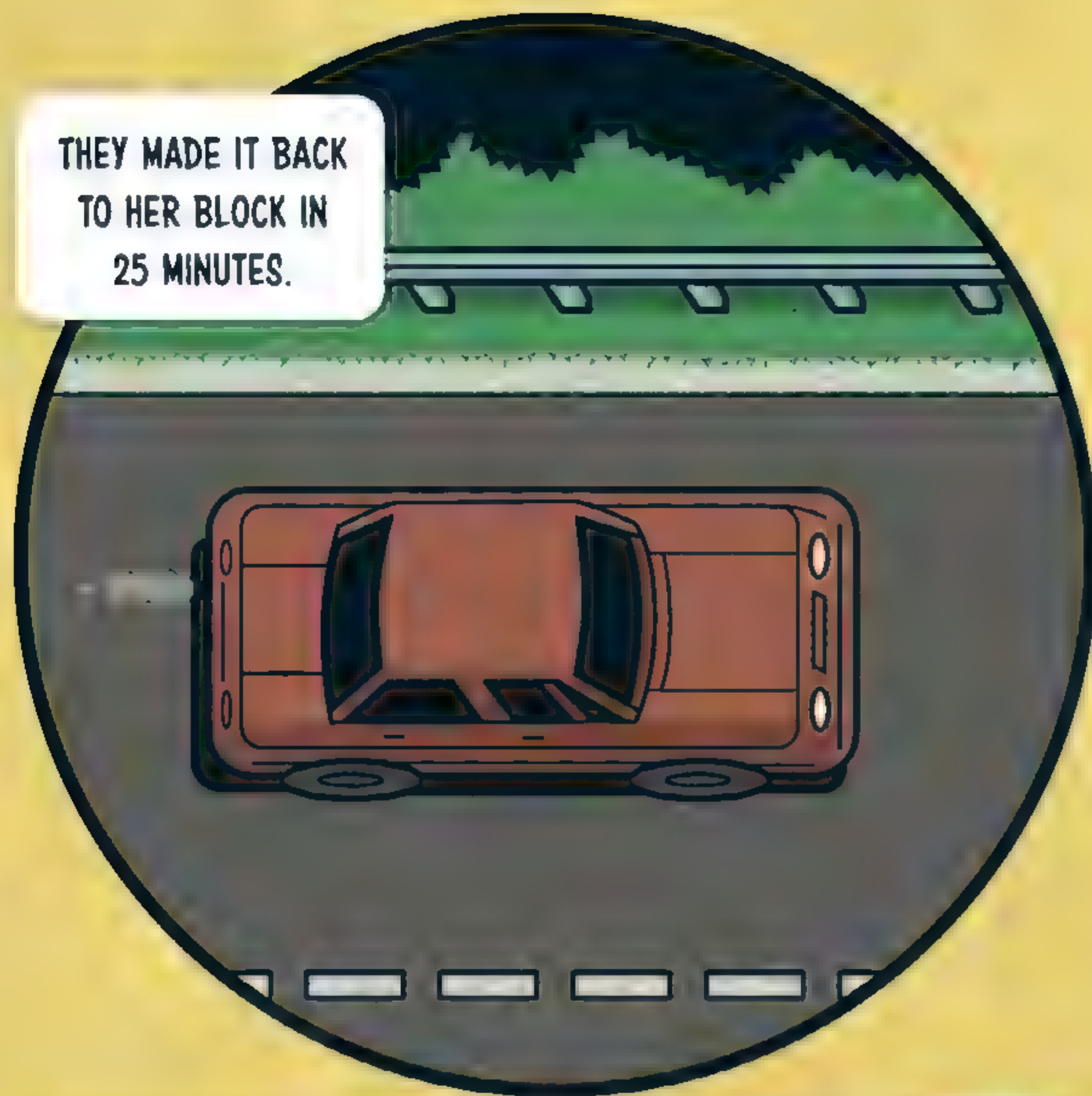
A BREEZE BLEW THROUGH THE LEAVES. THEIR SHADOWS SPLASHED OVER THE ROCKS IN THE DAPPLED SUNLIGHT. JIM WAS GONE.



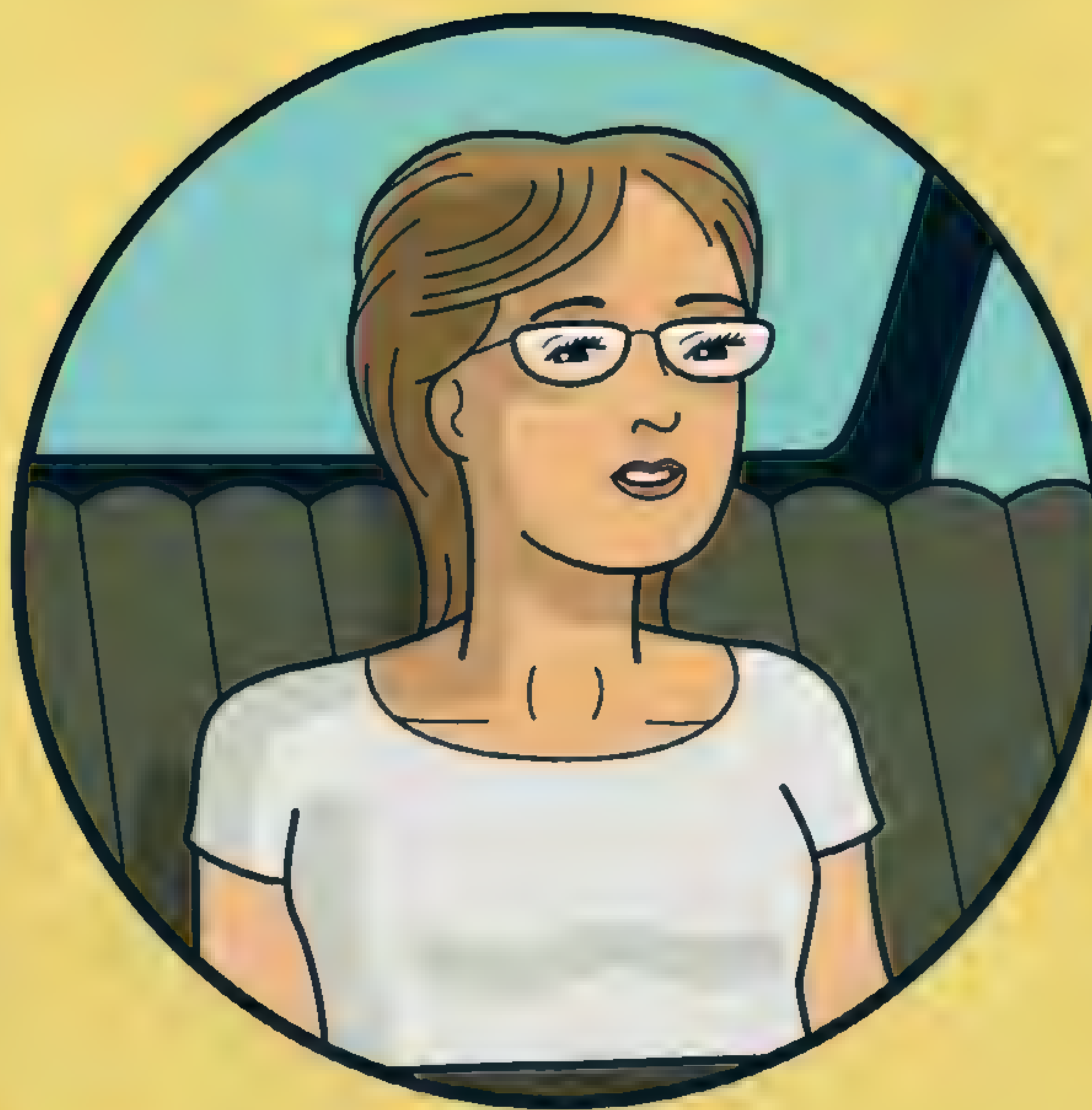
THEY HUSTLED HER OUT TO THE CAR.

BRYAN HAD GONE THROUGH HER PHONE AND DOWNLOADED ALL HER CONTACTS.





THEY MADE IT BACK  
TO HER BLOCK IN  
25 MINUTES.



I'LL PICK YOU UP  
HERE, EVERY WEEK,  
FOR THE SÉANCE.  
I'LL TEXT YOU  
BEFORE I COME.

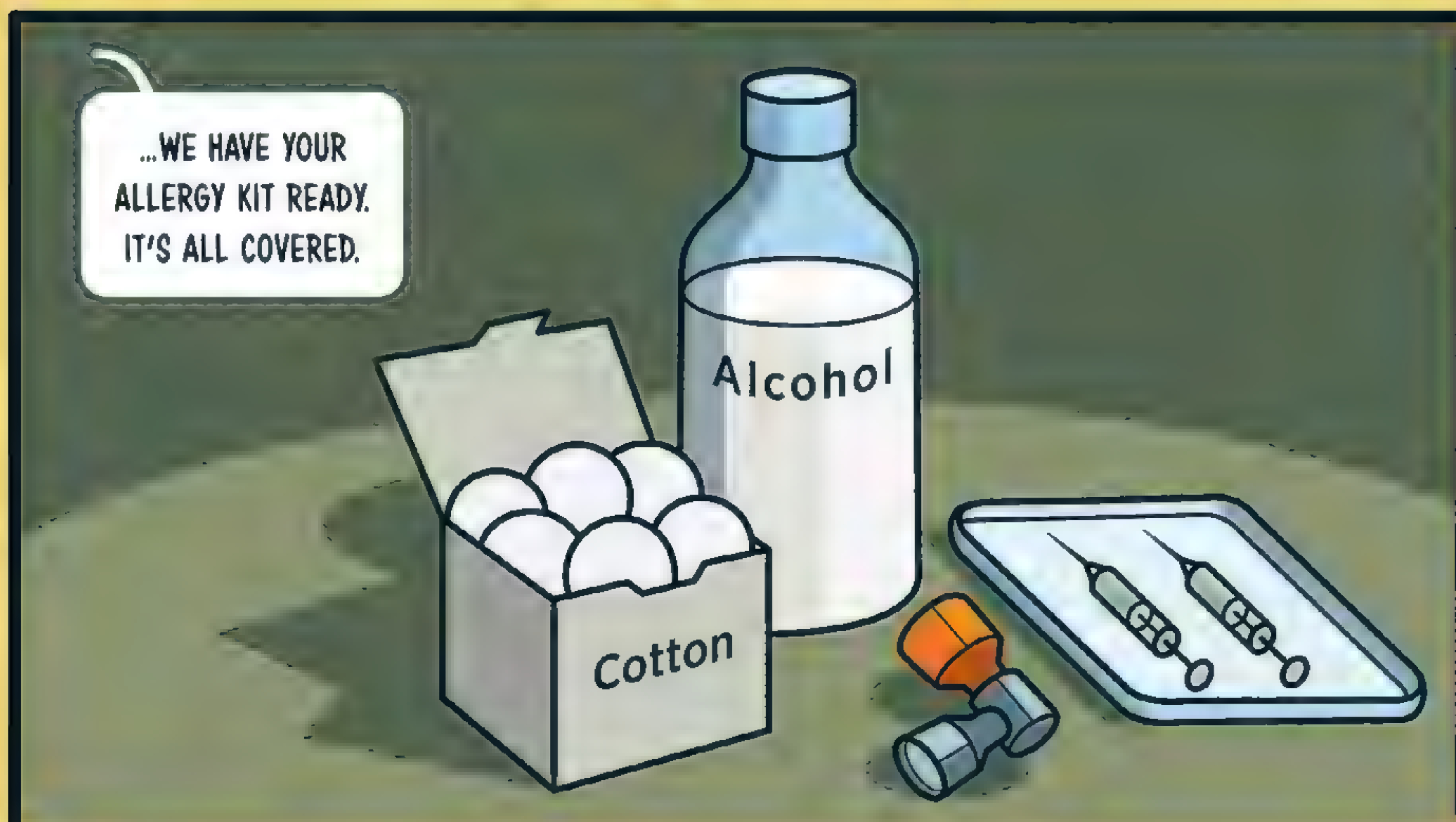
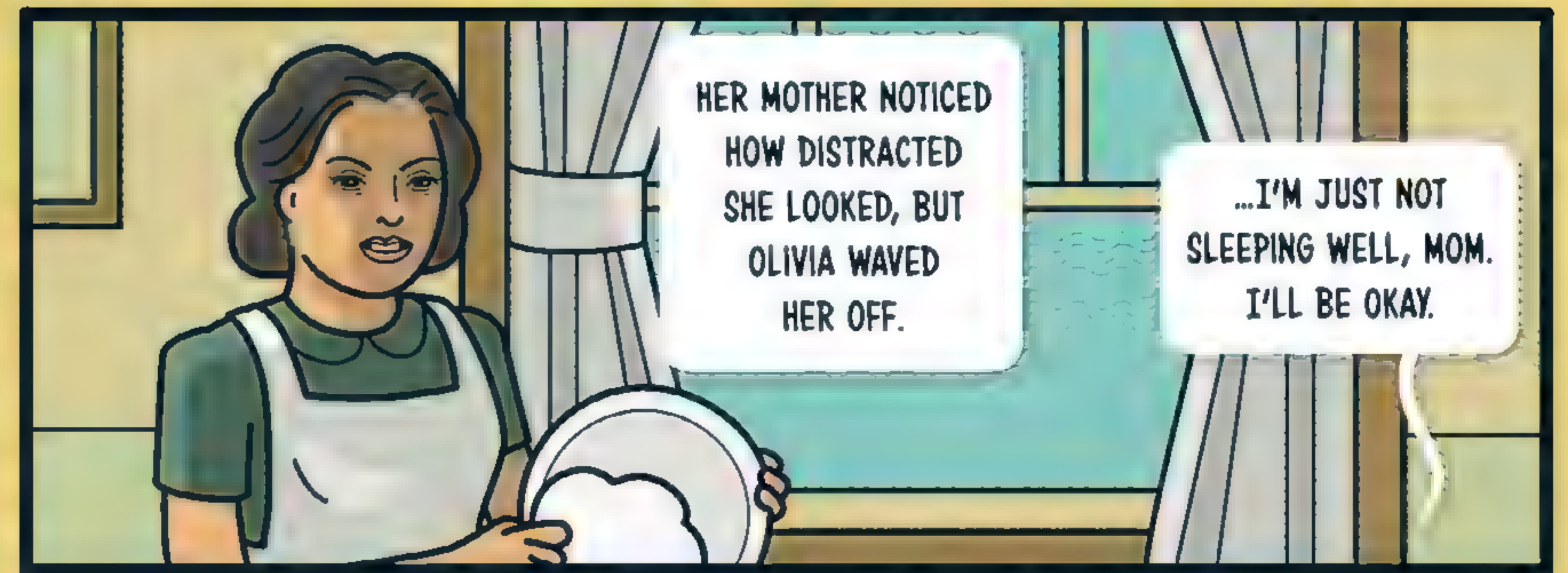
IT'LL BE YOUR DECISION IF  
YOU WANT TO COMPLY WITH US.  
BUT THE COST OF THAT DECISION  
FALLS ON YOUR MOM AND BROTHER.  
THEY'LL PAY THE PRICE FOR  
YOUR MISTAKE.

IF YOU DO COMPLY, YOU'LL MAKE  
A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY.  
THEY UNDERSTAND HOW VALUABLE  
YOU ARE...YOUR MOM WOULDN'T  
HAVE TO WORK ANYMORE.

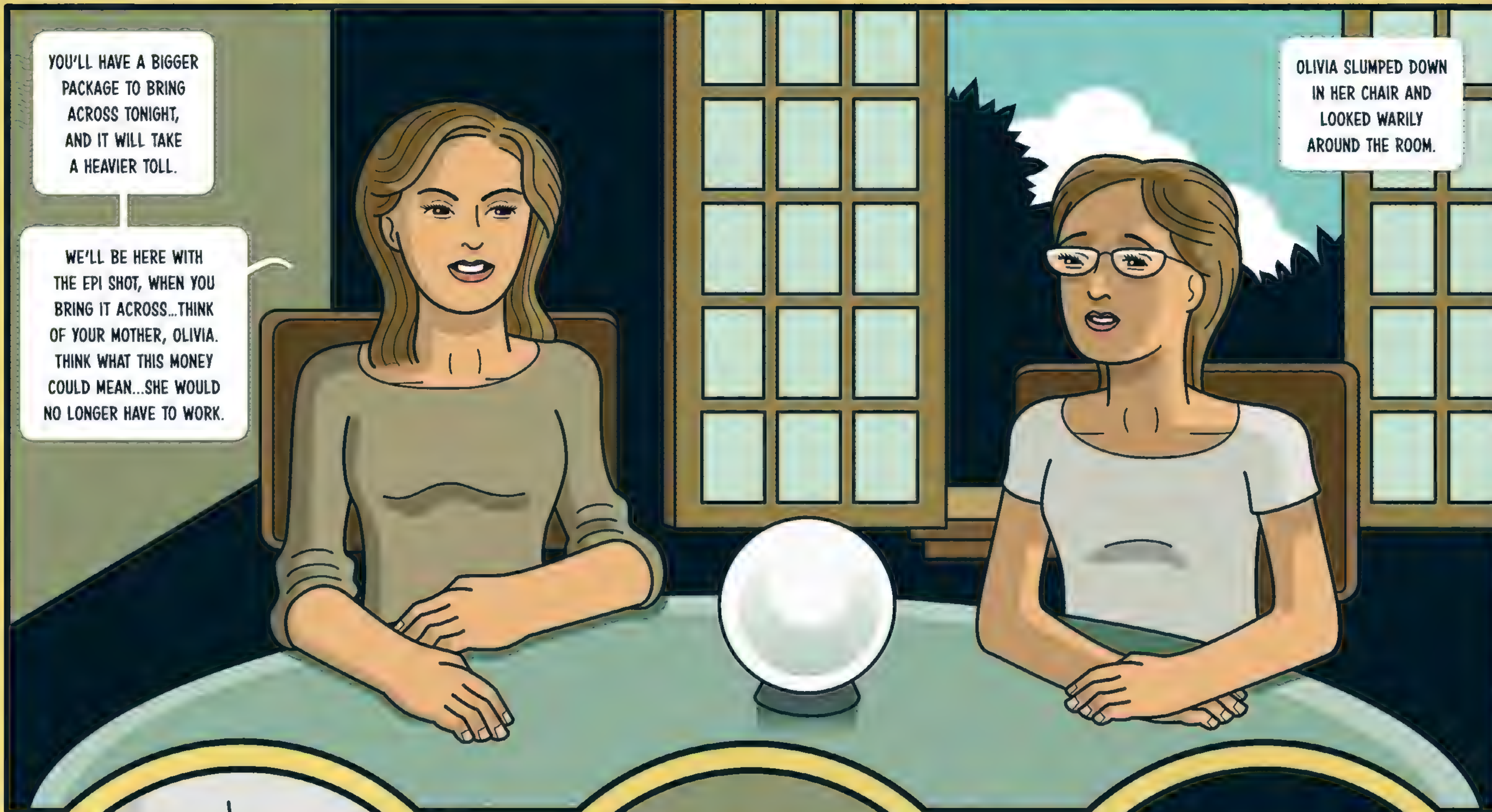


BRYAN PULLED OVER  
TWO BLOCKS FROM HER HOUSE.  
SHE GOT OUT WITHOUT SAYING  
A WORD AND WALKED HOME.









YOU'LL HAVE A BIGGER  
PACKAGE TO BRING  
ACROSS TONIGHT,  
AND IT WILL TAKE  
A HEAVIER TOLL.

WE'LL BE HERE WITH  
THE EPI SHOT, WHEN YOU  
BRING IT ACROSS...THINK  
OF YOUR MOTHER, OLIVIA.  
THINK WHAT THIS MONEY  
COULD MEAN...SHE WOULD  
NO LONGER HAVE TO WORK.

OLIVIA SLUMPED DOWN  
IN HER CHAIR AND  
LOOKED WARILY  
AROUND THE ROOM.



BRYAN SAT DOWN  
ON THE OTHER SIDE  
OF OLIVIA AND HELD  
HER ARM.



IRIS UNSCREWED  
THE LID AND  
REACHED IN...



...THE LIGHTS  
DIMMED.





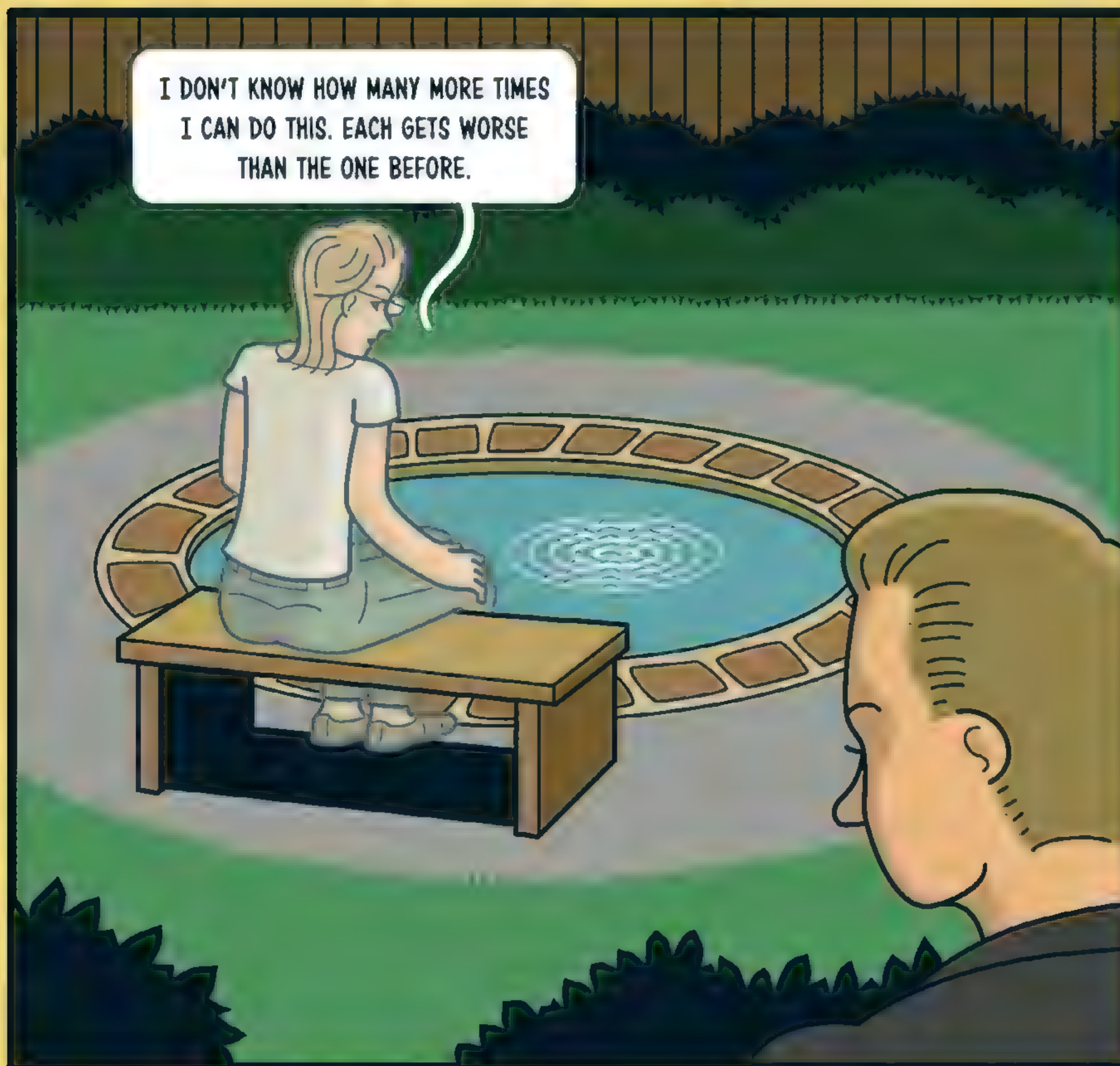
IN A FEW MINUTES  
JIM COULD FEEL  
THE STATIC CHARGE  
RUNNING BETWEEN  
THEM. HEARING A  
CROW'S CAW,  
JIM LOOKED UP.



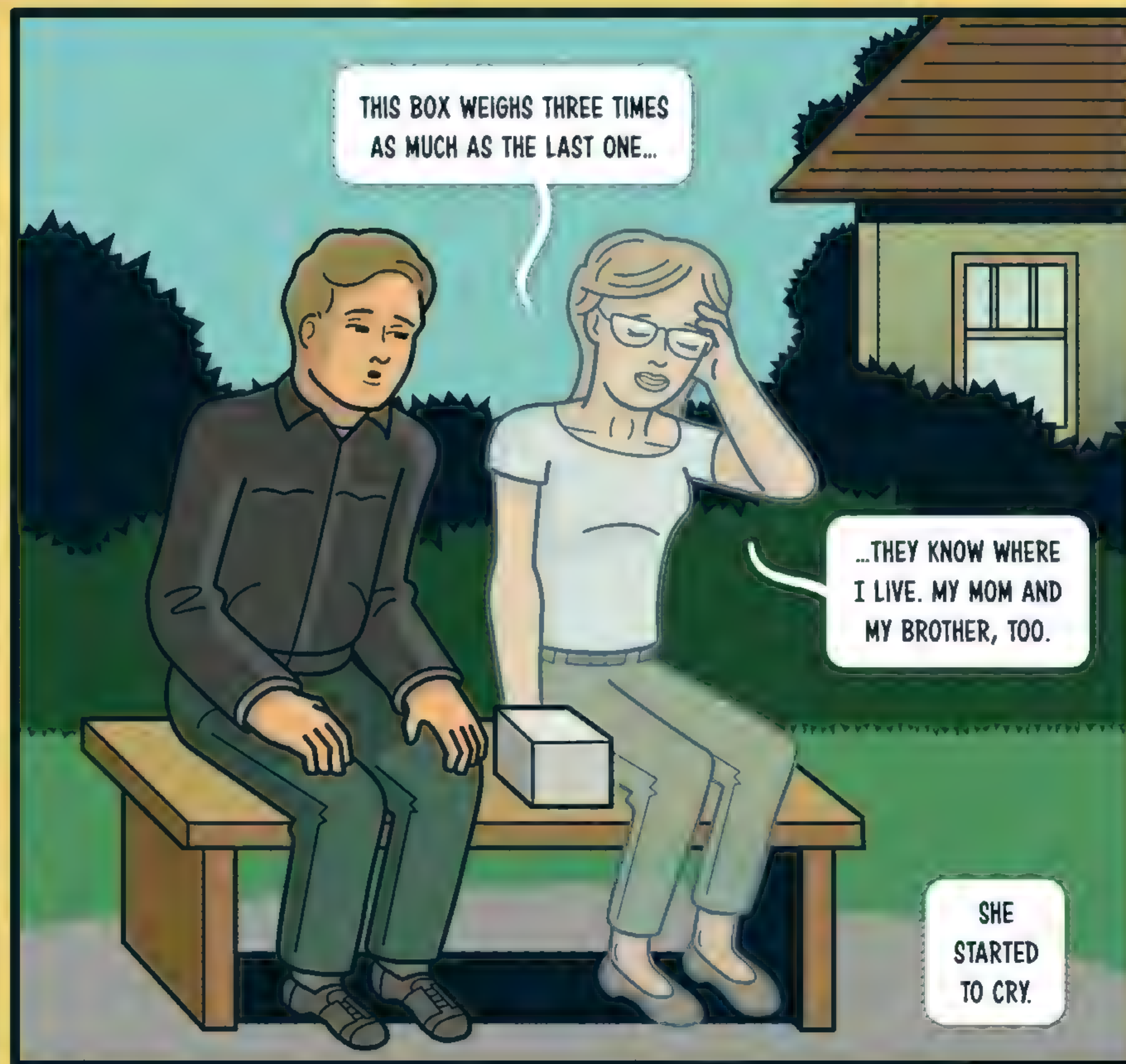
THE BIRD WAS SITTING  
ON A TREE BRANCH  
LOOKING DOWN AT HIM.



JIM PULLED THE  
FENCE DOOR OPEN  
AND WALKED IN.



I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY MORE TIMES  
I CAN DO THIS. EACH GETS WORSE  
THAN THE ONE BEFORE.

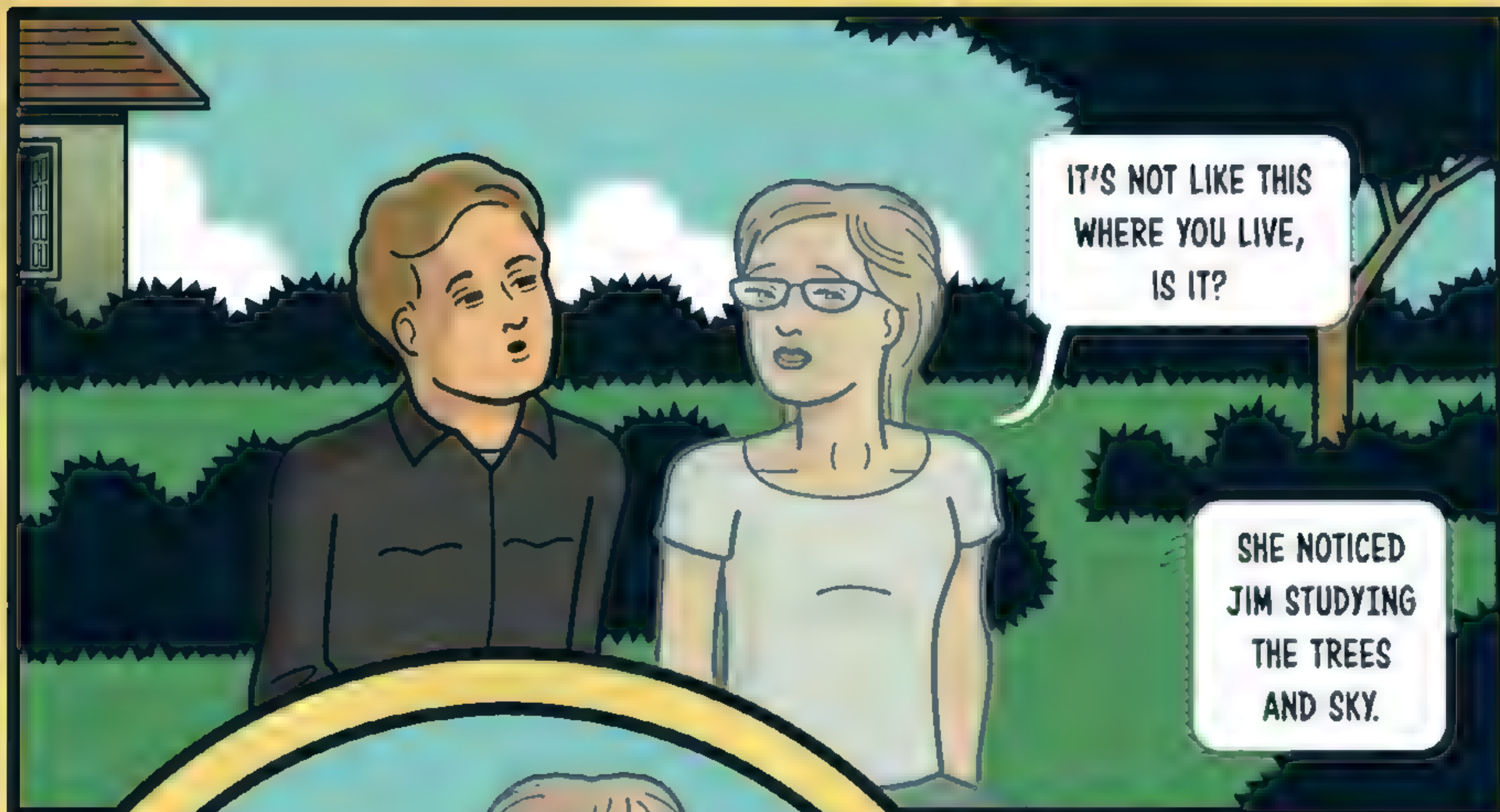
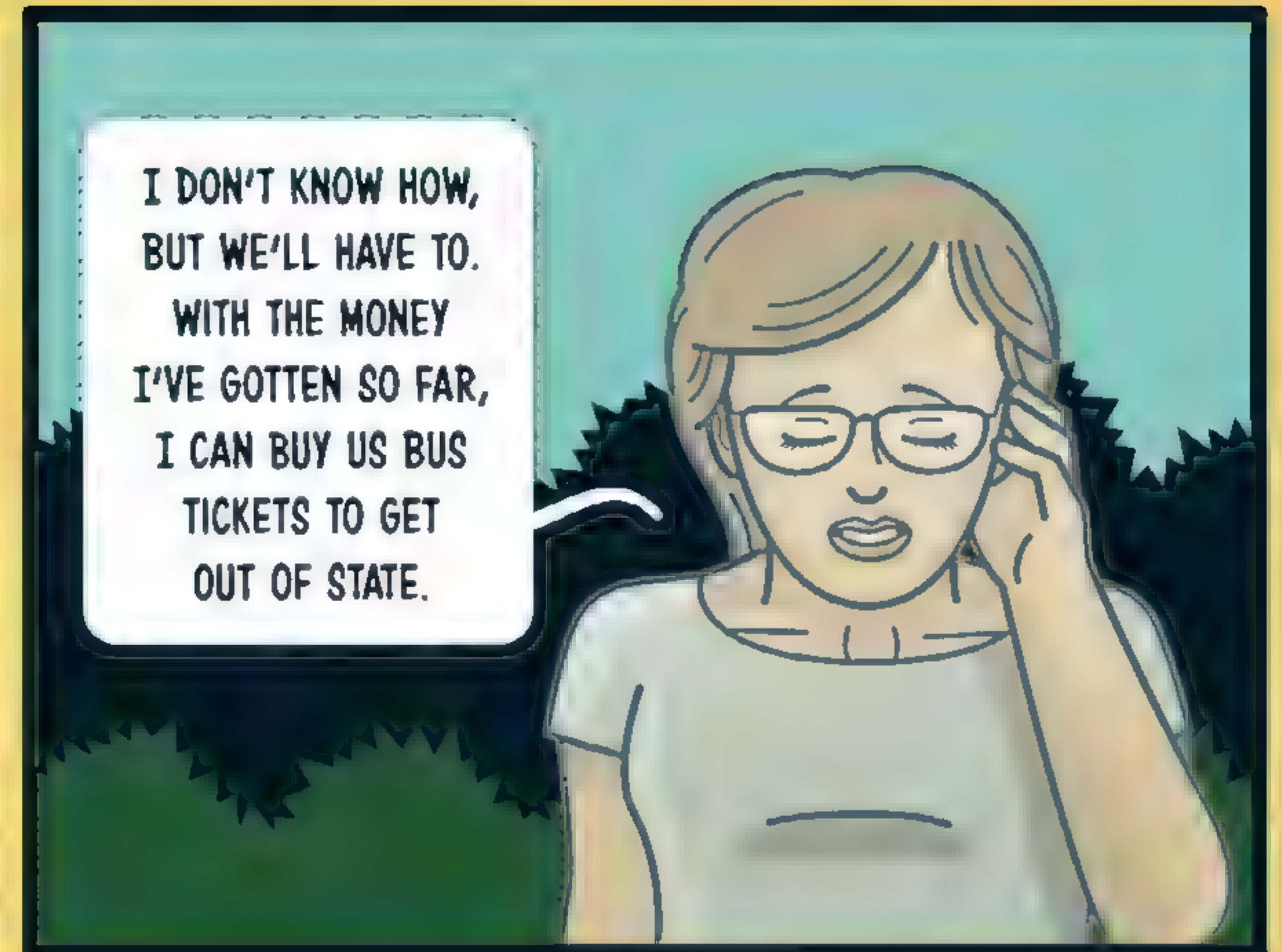


THIS BOX WEIGHS THREE TIMES  
AS MUCH AS THE LAST ONE...

...THEY KNOW WHERE  
I LIVE. MY MOM AND  
MY BROTHER, TOO.

SHE  
STARTED  
TO CRY.







# CHAPTER 10

JIM CLEANED OFF THE TARMAC. HE SWEEPED ALL THE CIGARETTE BUTTS INTO A PILE AND SHOVELED THEM INTO THE TRASH.

IT WAS LATE IN THE AFTERNOON BEFORE THE RUSH OF CUSTOMERS FINALLY SUBSIDED.

AFTER SITTING IN THE SUN ALL DAY, THE INSIDE OF HIS CAR WAS AN INFERNO.

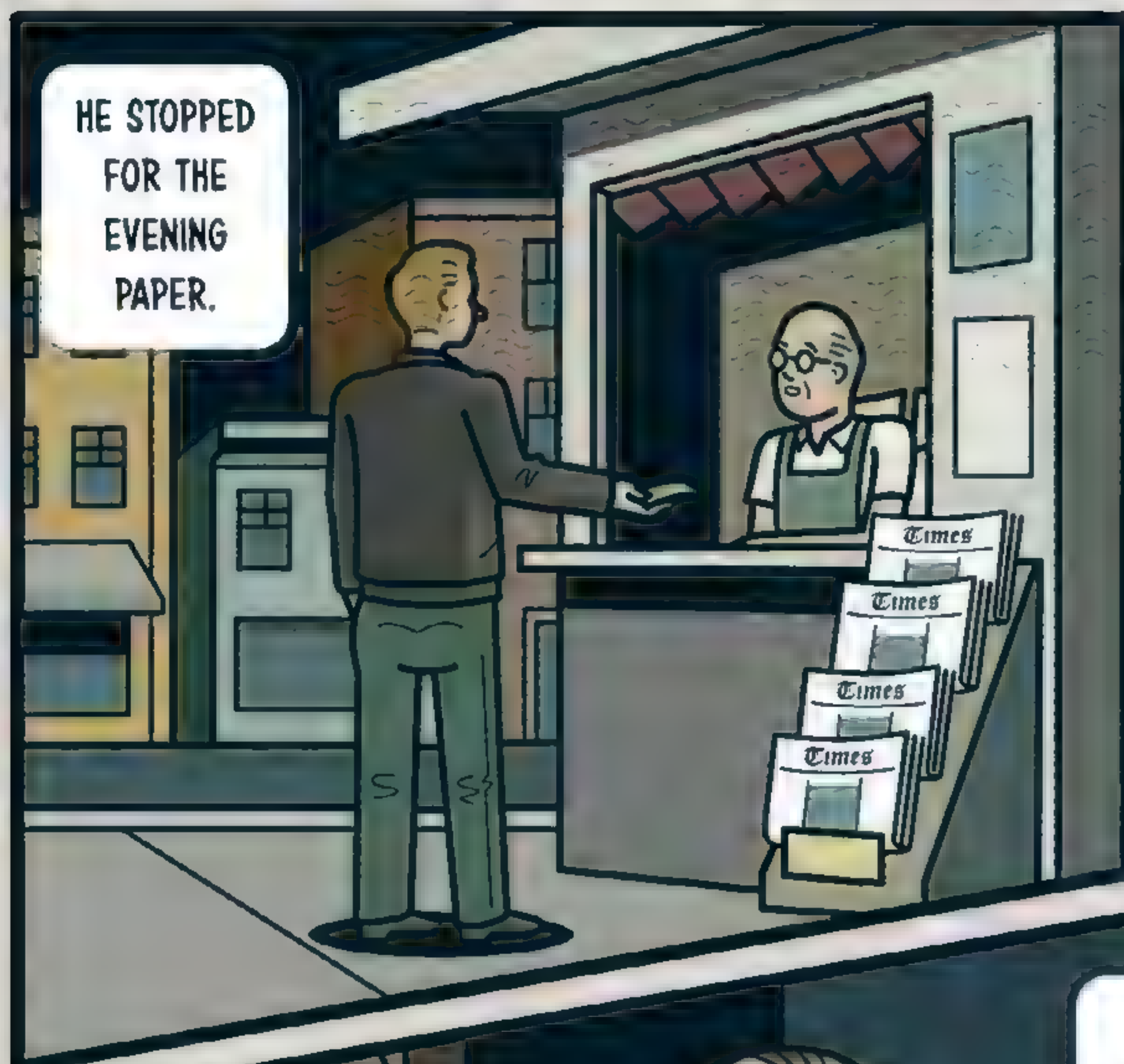
HE DIDN'T BOTHER WITH THE RADIO...

IT WAS A WARM DAY. THE BLACK SUN SHIMMERED THROUGH THE BLUE HAZE OF CAR EXHAUST.

HE COUNTED OUT THE CASH DRAWER BEFORE THE NIGHT GUY SHOWED UP.

...NOT THAT IT CAME IN VERY WELL ANYWAY.

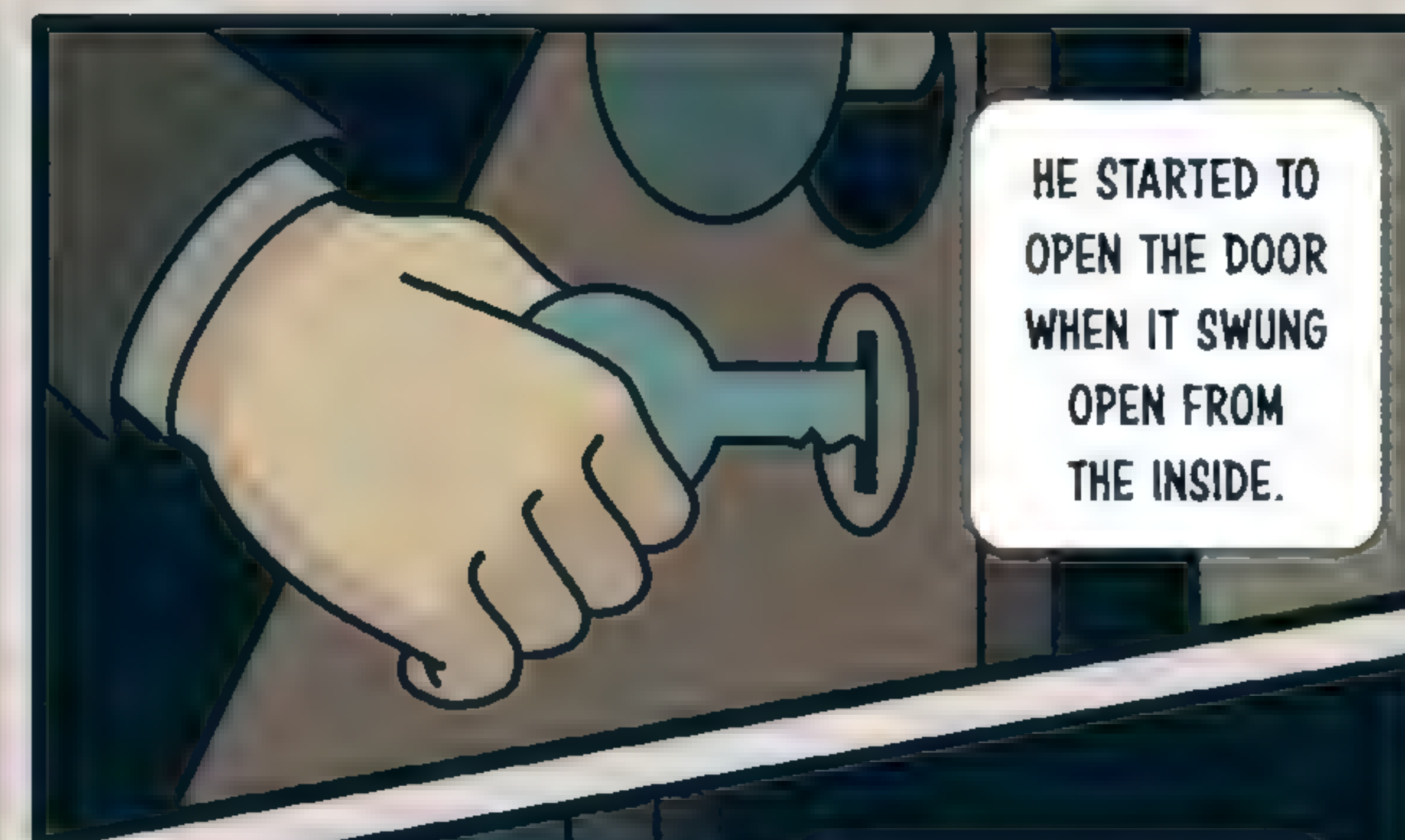




HE STOPPED  
FOR THE  
EVENING  
PAPER.



AS HE WALKED  
UPSTAIRS, HE  
HEARD TV SETS  
BLARING FROM  
BEHIND CLOSED  
DOORS.



HE STARTED TO  
OPEN THE DOOR  
WHEN IT SWUNG  
OPEN FROM  
THE INSIDE.



IN THE CENTER  
OF THE ROOM STOOD  
HIS PAROLE OFFICER,  
ARMS CROSSED.



DON'T YOU  
CHECK  
YOUR MAIL?

HE TOSSED THE LETTER  
TO JIM. IT WAS FROM  
THE PAROLE OFFICE.

THERE WERE ALSO  
DETECTIVES GOING  
THROUGH JIM'S STUFF.



YOU KNOW HOW WE FEEL  
ABOUT SÉANCES, RIGHT?  
...AND ANY CONTACT WITH  
THE LIVING AT ALL, UNDER  
ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.  
YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT, RIGHT?

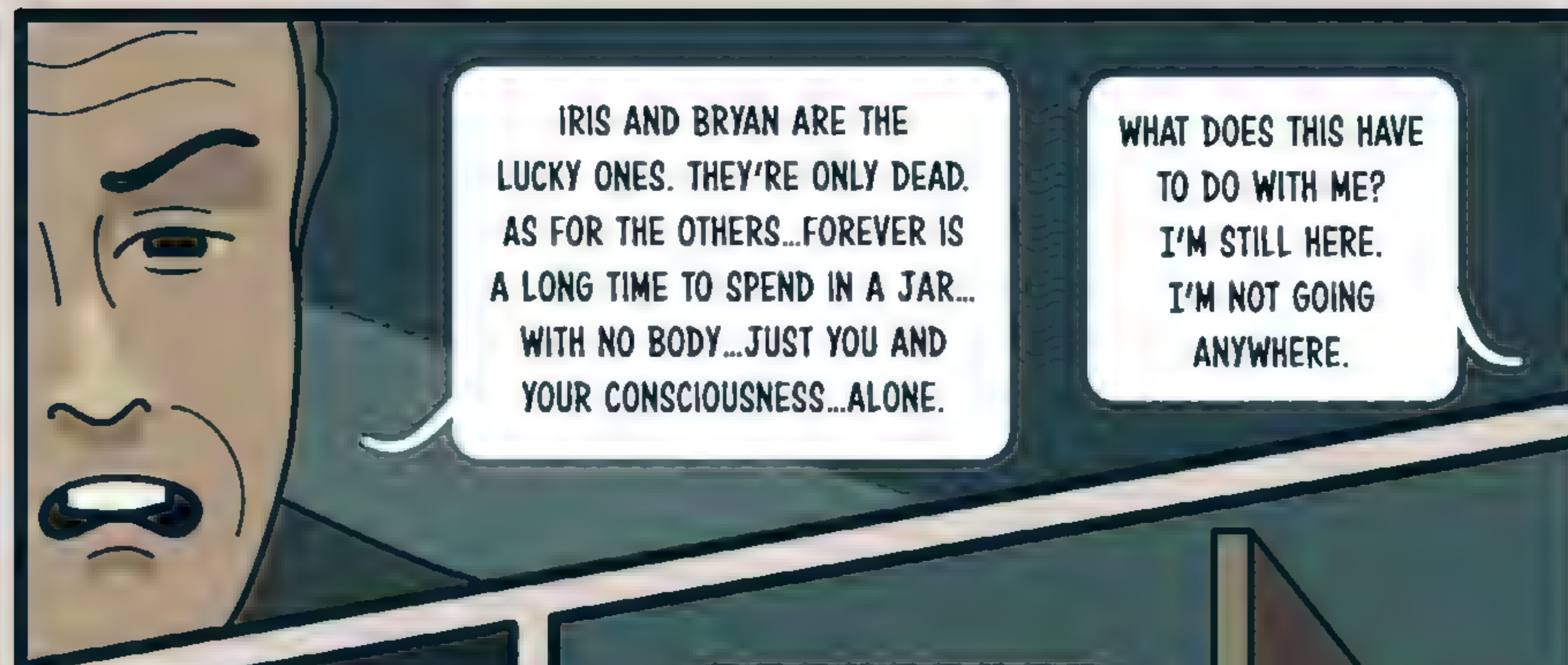


THESE "CONNECTIONS"  
AREN'T SUPPOSED TO  
HAPPEN. IT THROWS  
EVERYTHING OUT OF  
WHACK. AND WHEN  
THINGS GET OUT OF  
WHACK, HADES GETS  
INVOLVED. AND YOU  
DON'T WANT HIM MAD  
AT YOU. NOT EVER.





I'LL LET YOU IN ON A LITTLE SECRET. US COPS STAY IN TOUCH. THE AFTER LIFE P.D. AND THE L.A.P.D. HAVE WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL A "RELATIONSHIP OF CONVENIENCE." IT'S GOOD FOR EVERYBODY... EVERYBODY BUT EDDIE, RAYMOND, IRIS, AND BRYAN. OH AND LINDA, TOO WE PICKED HER UP LAST NIGHT.



IRIS AND BRYAN ARE THE LUCKY ONES. THEY'RE ONLY DEAD. AS FOR THE OTHERS...FOREVER IS A LONG TIME TO SPEND IN A JAR... WITH NO BODY...JUST YOU AND YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS...ALONE.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME? I'M STILL HERE. I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.



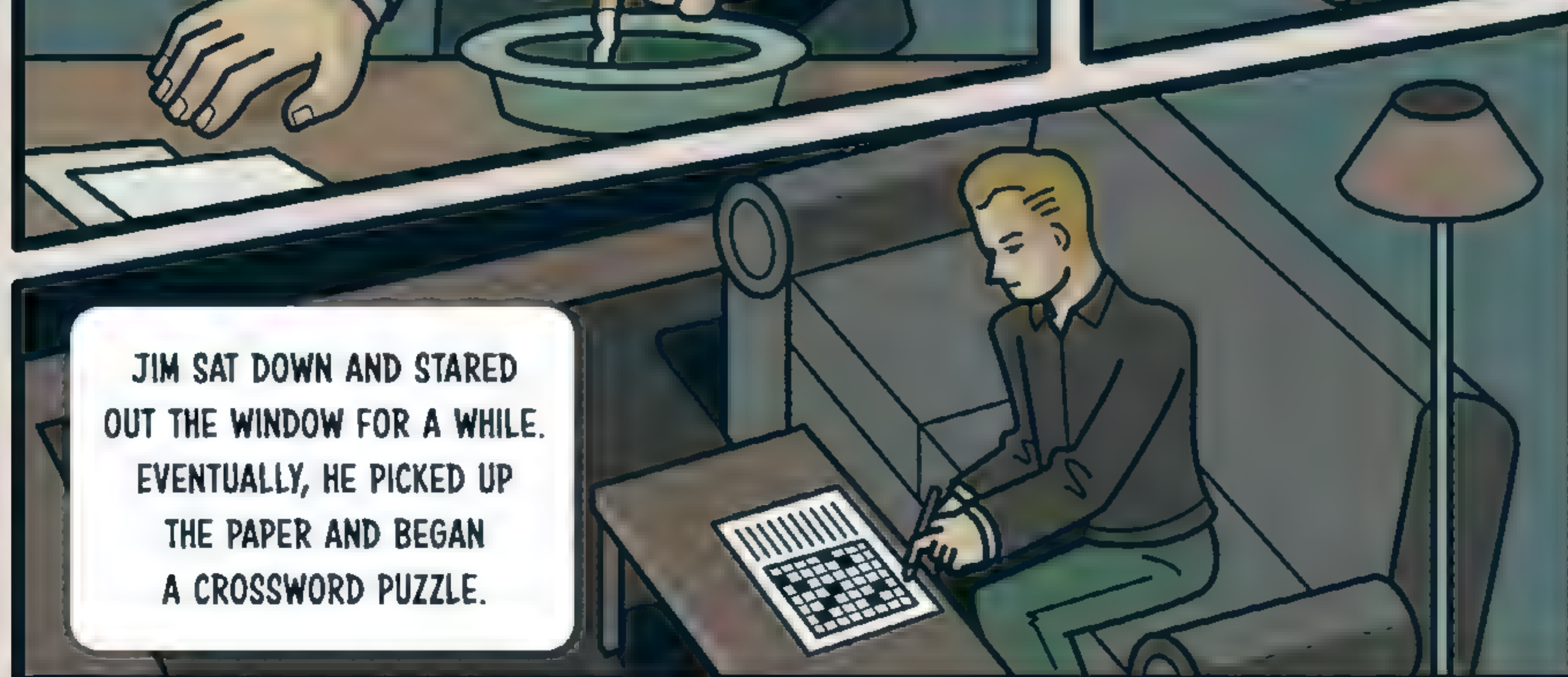
IT WASN'T YOU THAT PAID THE PRICE...THIS TIME.



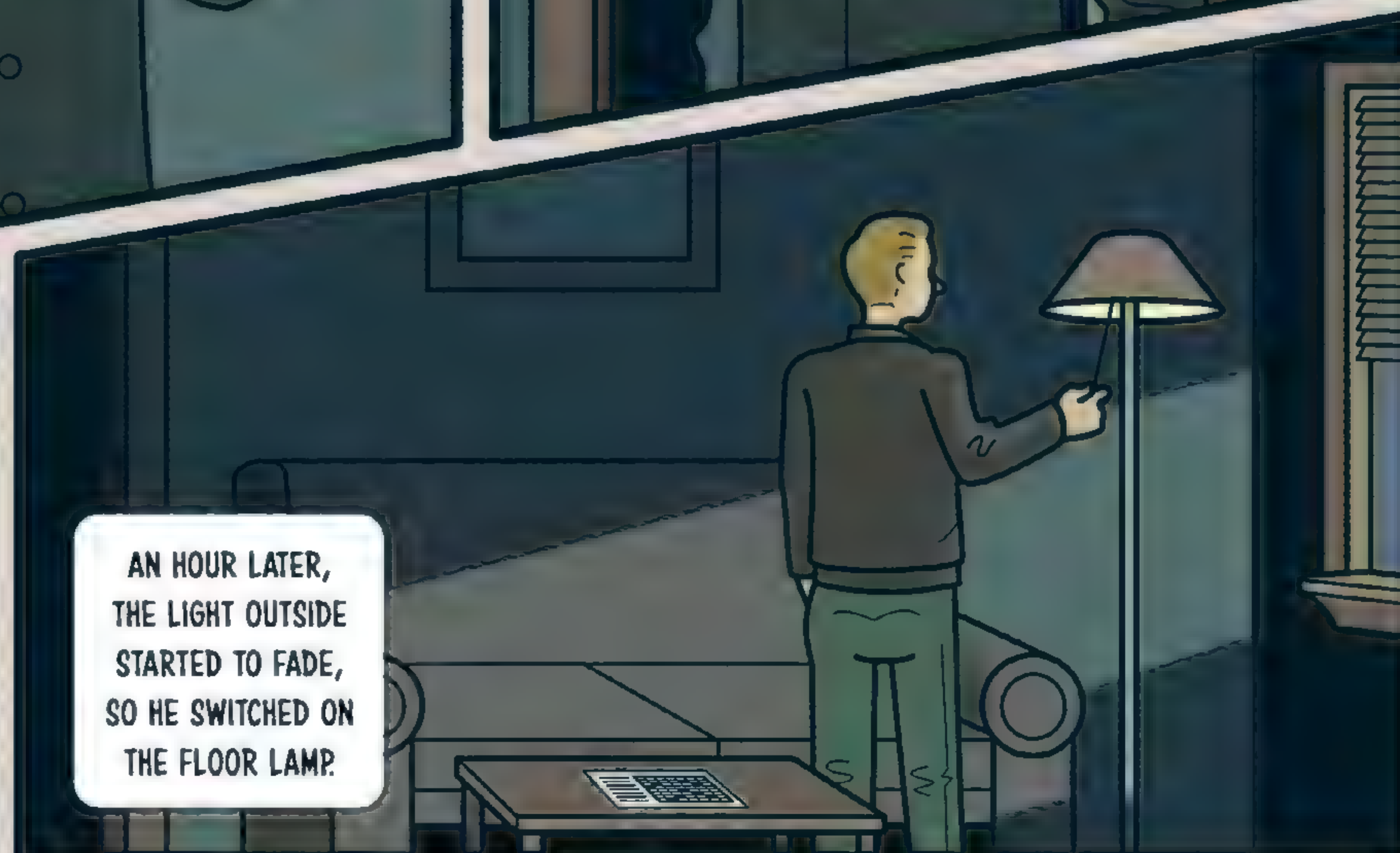
REMEMBER, JIM...



...THERE ARE WORSE THINGS THAN BEING DEAD.

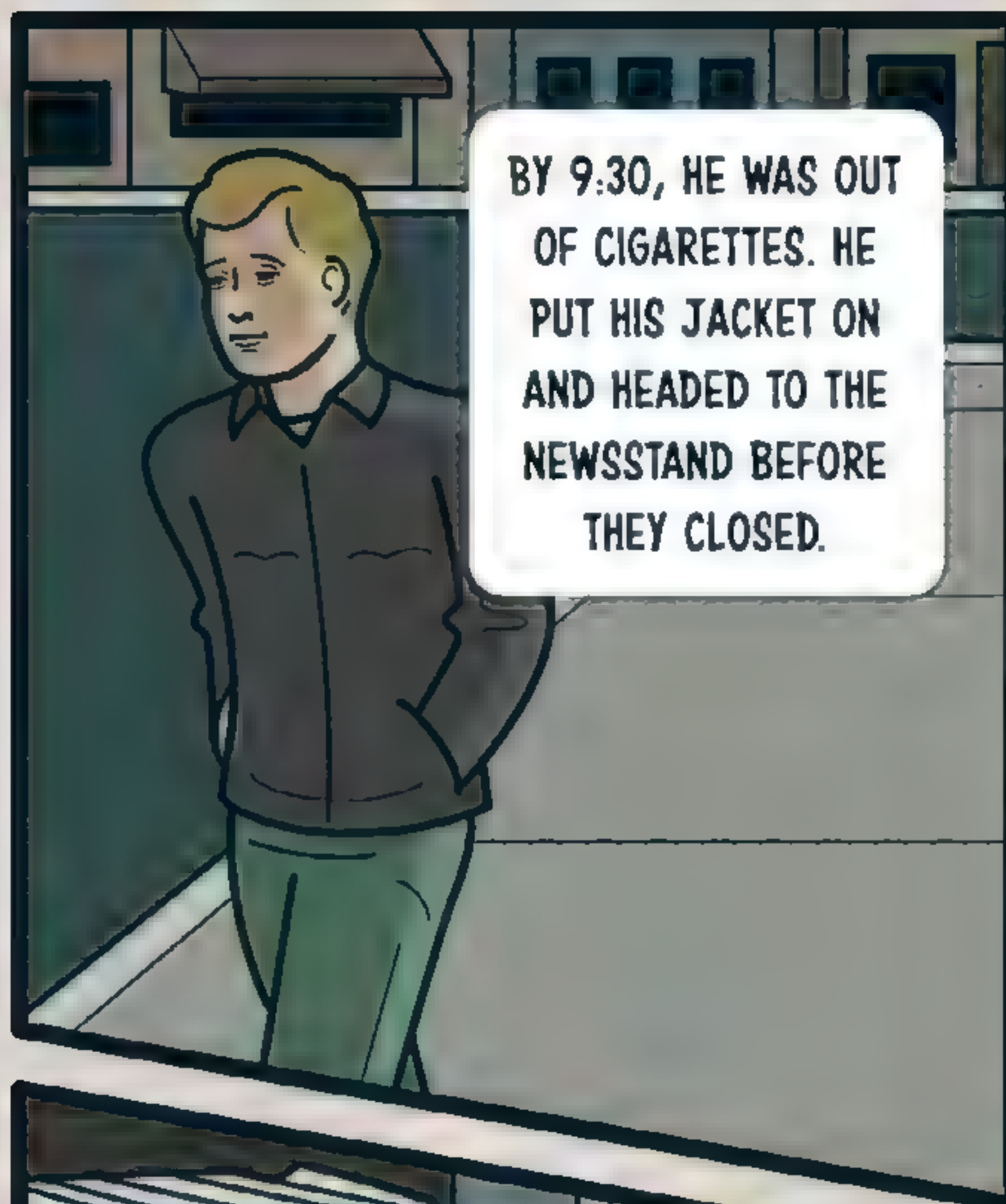


JIM SAT DOWN AND STARED OUT THE WINDOW FOR A WHILE. EVENTUALLY, HE PICKED UP THE PAPER AND BEGAN A CROSSWORD PUZZLE.



AN HOUR LATER, THE LIGHT OUTSIDE STARTED TO FADE, SO HE SWITCHED ON THE FLOOR LAMP.





BY 9:30, HE WAS OUT OF CIGARETTES. HE PUT HIS JACKET ON AND HEADED TO THE NEWSSTAND BEFORE THEY CLOSED.



HE BOUGHT A PACK AND DECIDED TO GO FOR A WALK.



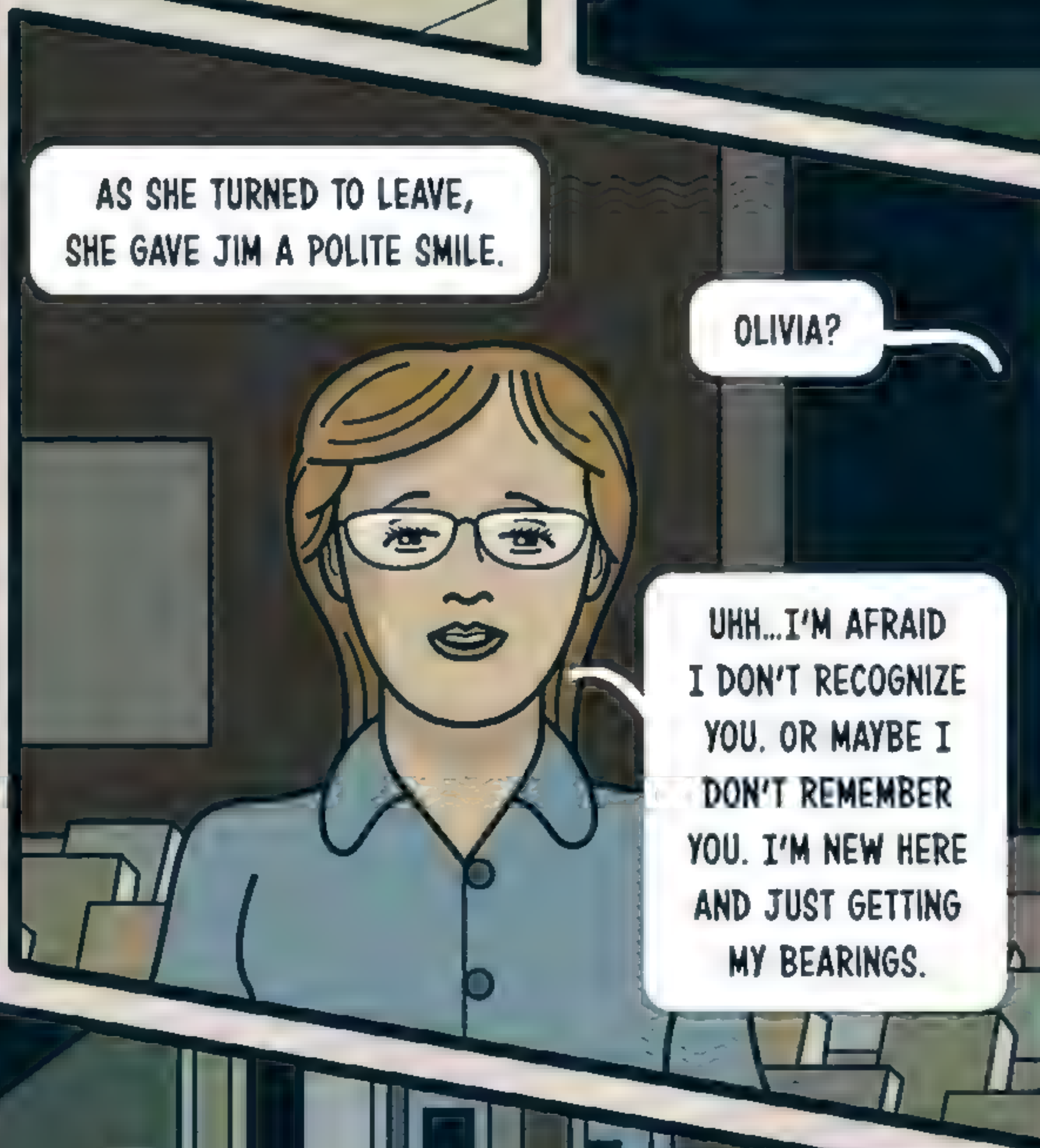
A POLICE CAR IDLED AT THE CURB. THE OFFICER WATCHED HIM AS HE WALKED BY.



UP AHEAD, HE SAW THE LIGHTS WERE ON IN THE USED BOOKSTORE.



A YOUNG WOMAN STOOD AT THE COUNTER.



AS SHE TURNED TO LEAVE, SHE GAVE JIM A POLITE SMILE.

OLIVIA?

UHH...I'M AFRAID I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOU. OR MAYBE I DON'T REMEMBER YOU. I'M NEW HERE AND JUST GETTING MY BEARINGS.

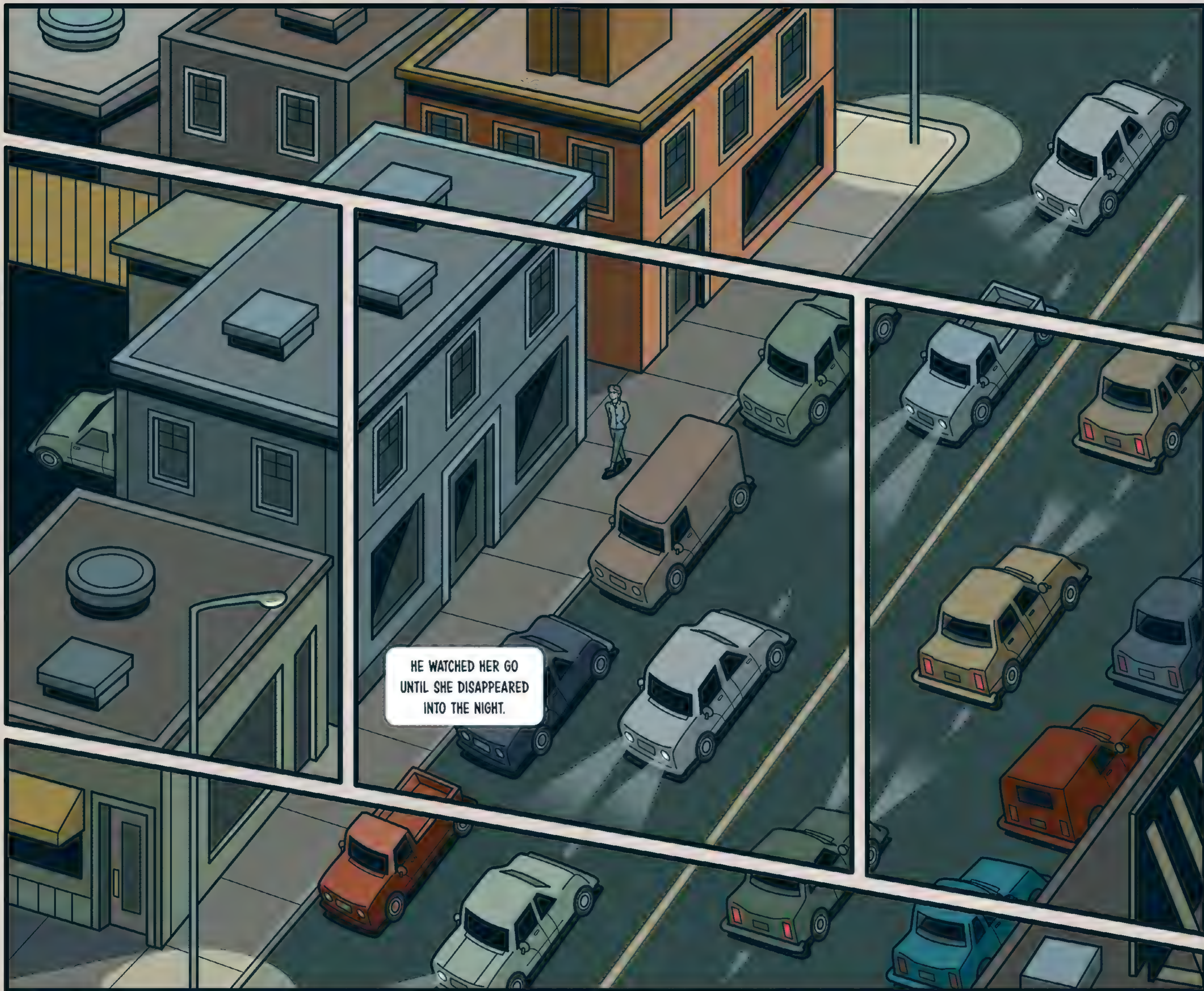


IT'S OKAY. WE MET ONCE OR TWICE. A LONG TIME AGO.



AS SHE WENT OUT THE DOOR, OLIVIA TURNED TO JIM, AND FOR A MOMENT, IT SEEMED AS IF SHE WAS ABOUT TO SPEAK. BUT INSTEAD, SHE WALKED ON.





HE WATCHED HER GO  
UNTIL SHE DISAPPEARED  
INTO THE NIGHT.

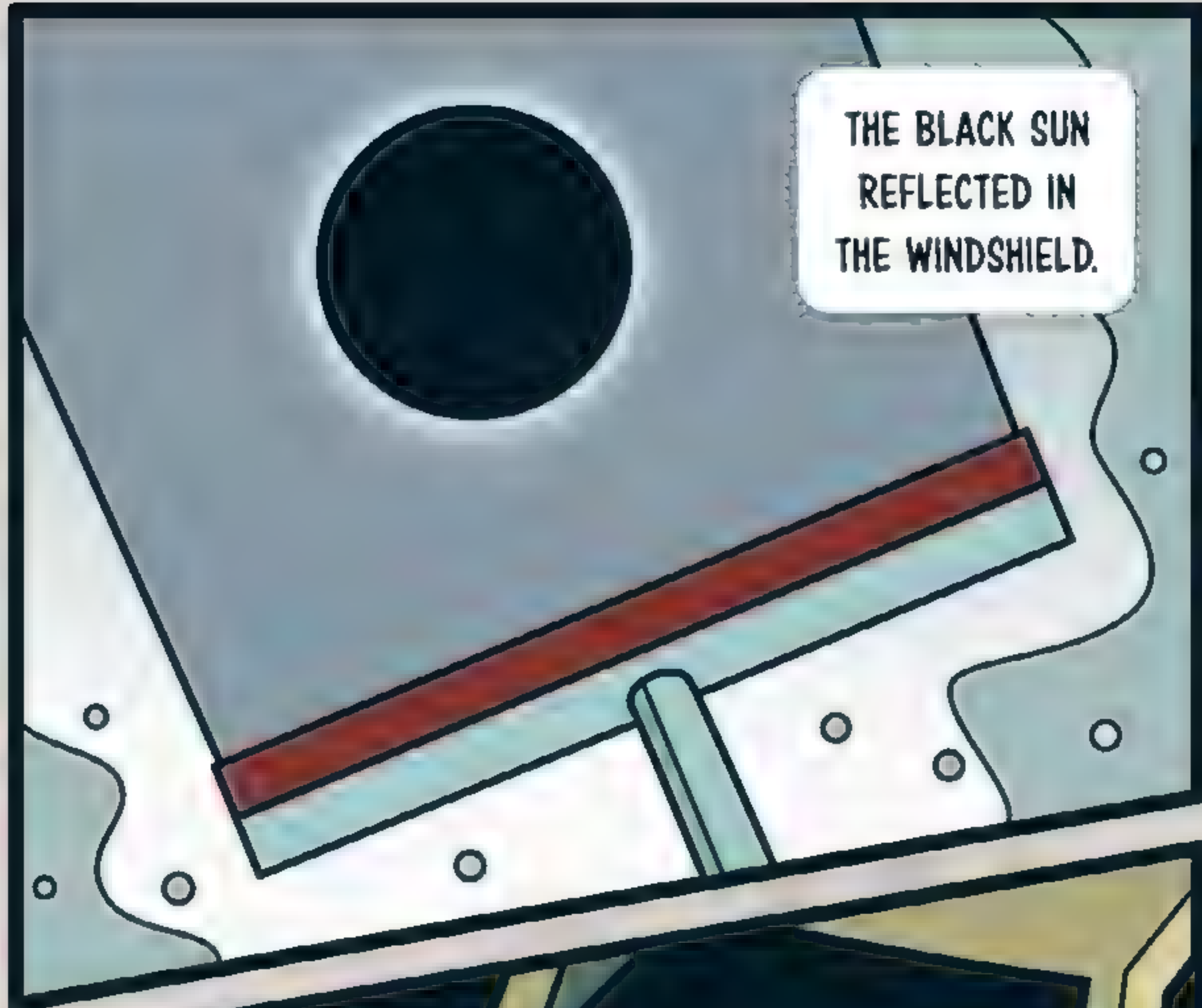




UNDER  
THE RIVER



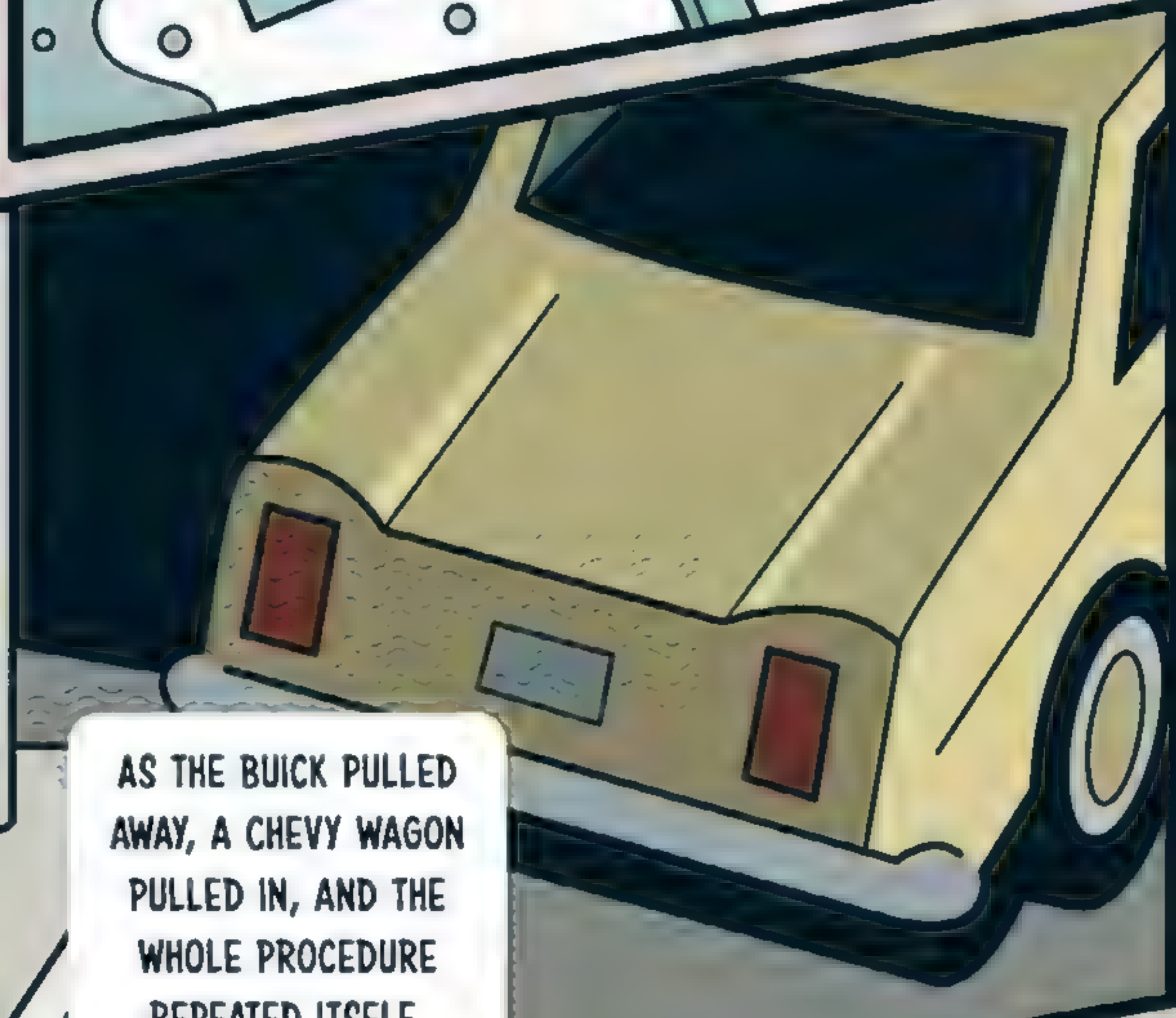
# CHAPTER 11 NEXT RIGHT



THE BLACK SUN  
REFLECTED IN  
THE WINDSHIELD.



THAT'LL BE NINE DOLLARS  
EVEN, MISTER. YOUR OIL  
AND WATER ARE FINE.



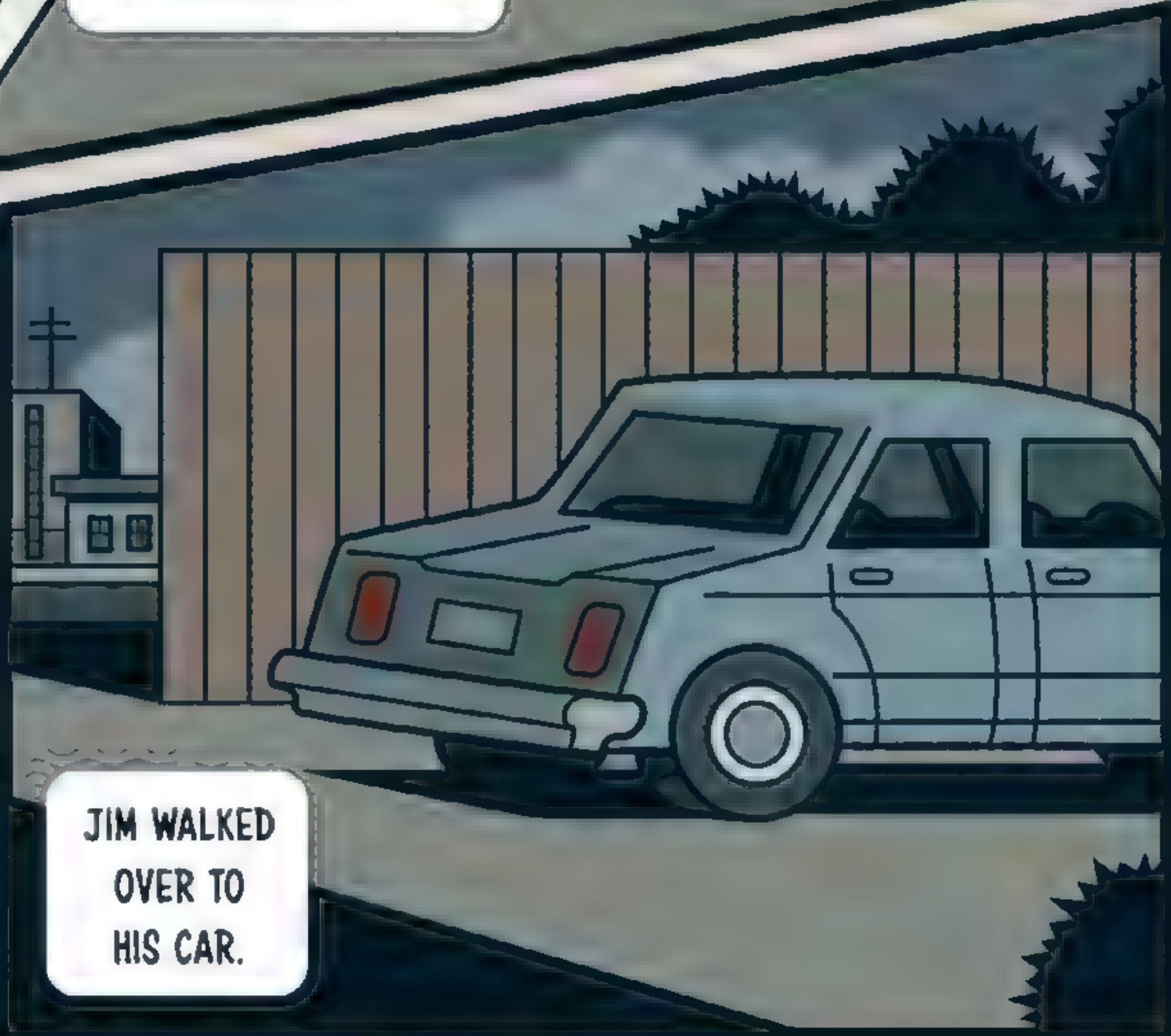
AS THE BUICK PULLED  
AWAY, A CHEVY WAGON  
PULLED IN, AND THE  
WHOLE PROCEDURE  
REPEATED ITSELF.



AT FIVE MINUTES TO  
FIVE, JIM COUNTED OUT  
THE DRAWER FOR THE  
NIGHT MAN.



WE'RE OUT OF  
CIGARETTES. THE  
DELIVERY GUY  
NEVER SHOWED.



JIM WALKED  
OVER TO  
HIS CAR.

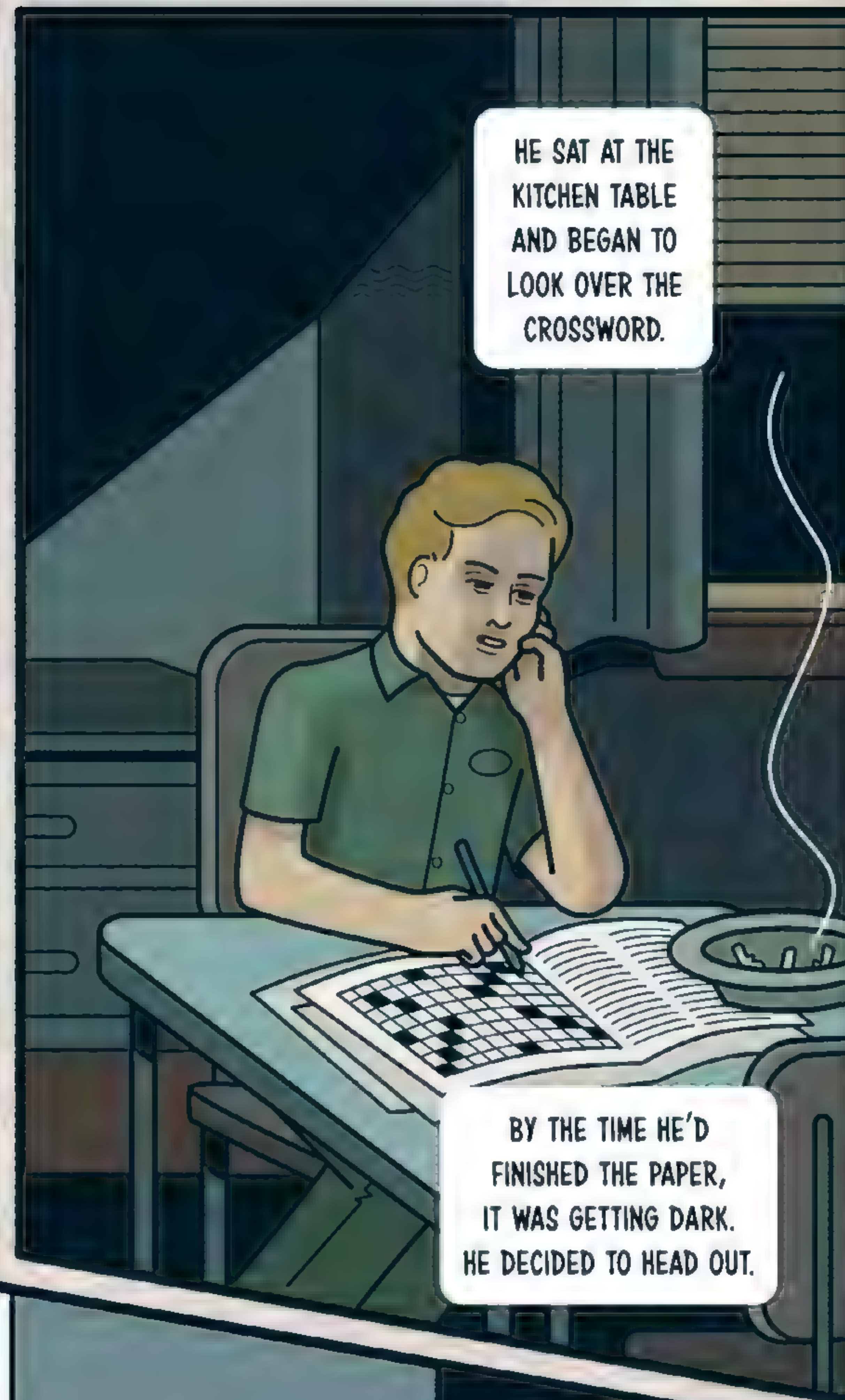




HE STOPPED AT THE NEWSSTAND,  
PICKED UP THE EVENING PAPER,  
AND WALKED ON TO HIS APARTMENT.



THE LOBBY WAS EMPTY, BUT HE HEARD  
THE MUFFLED TV SOUNDS COMING FROM  
BEHIND THE APARTMENT DOORS.  
HE CHECKED HIS MAILBOX. NOTHING.



HE SAT AT THE  
KITCHEN TABLE  
AND BEGAN TO  
LOOK OVER THE  
CROSSWORD.

BY THE TIME HE'D  
FINISHED THE PAPER,  
IT WAS GETTING DARK.  
HE DECIDED TO HEAD OUT.

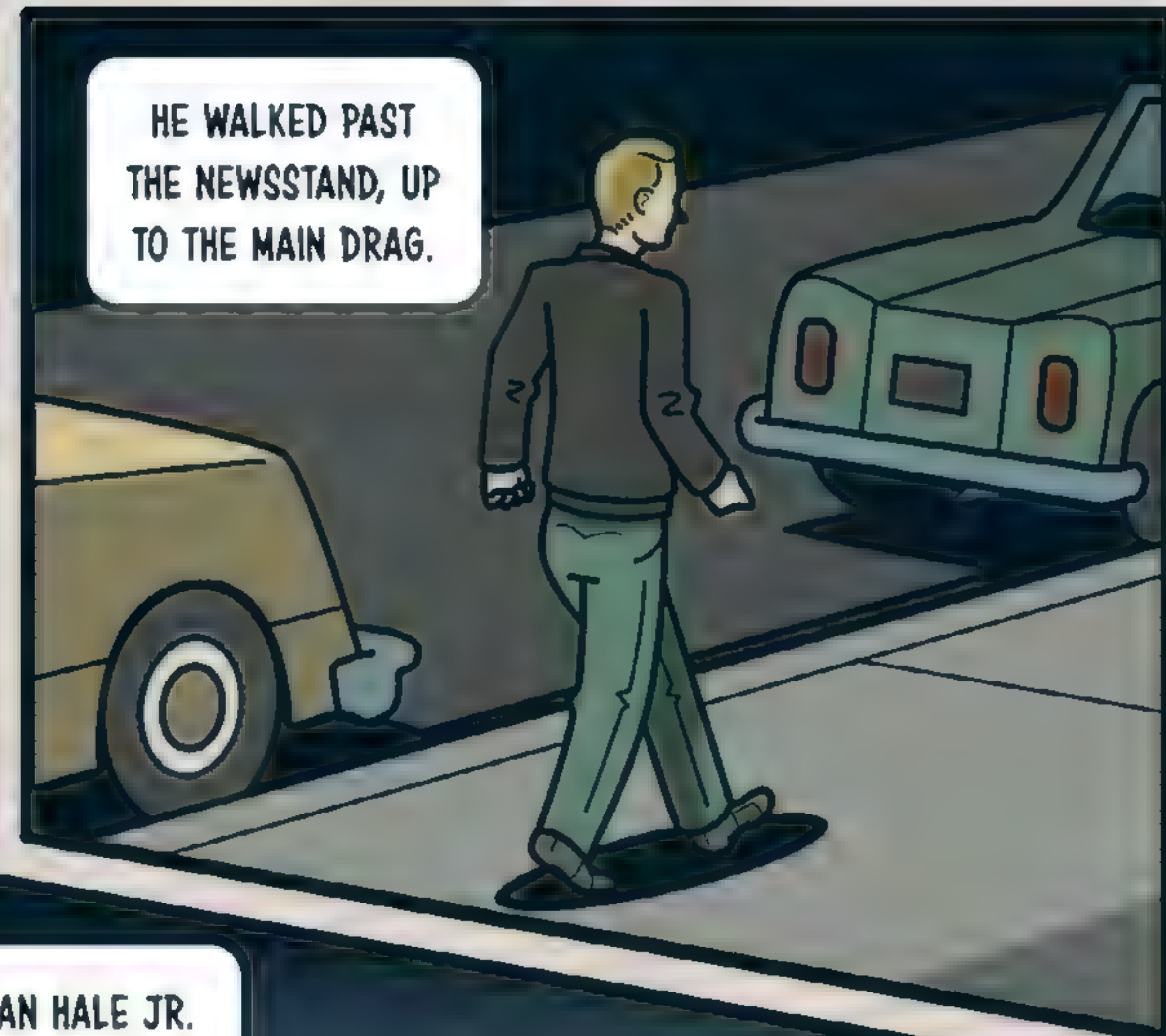


AS JIM WALKED ACROSS THE LOBBY,  
HE SAW A WOMAN STRUGGLING TO  
OPEN THE DOOR. HER ARMS WERE  
FILLED WITH DRY CLEANING BAGS.

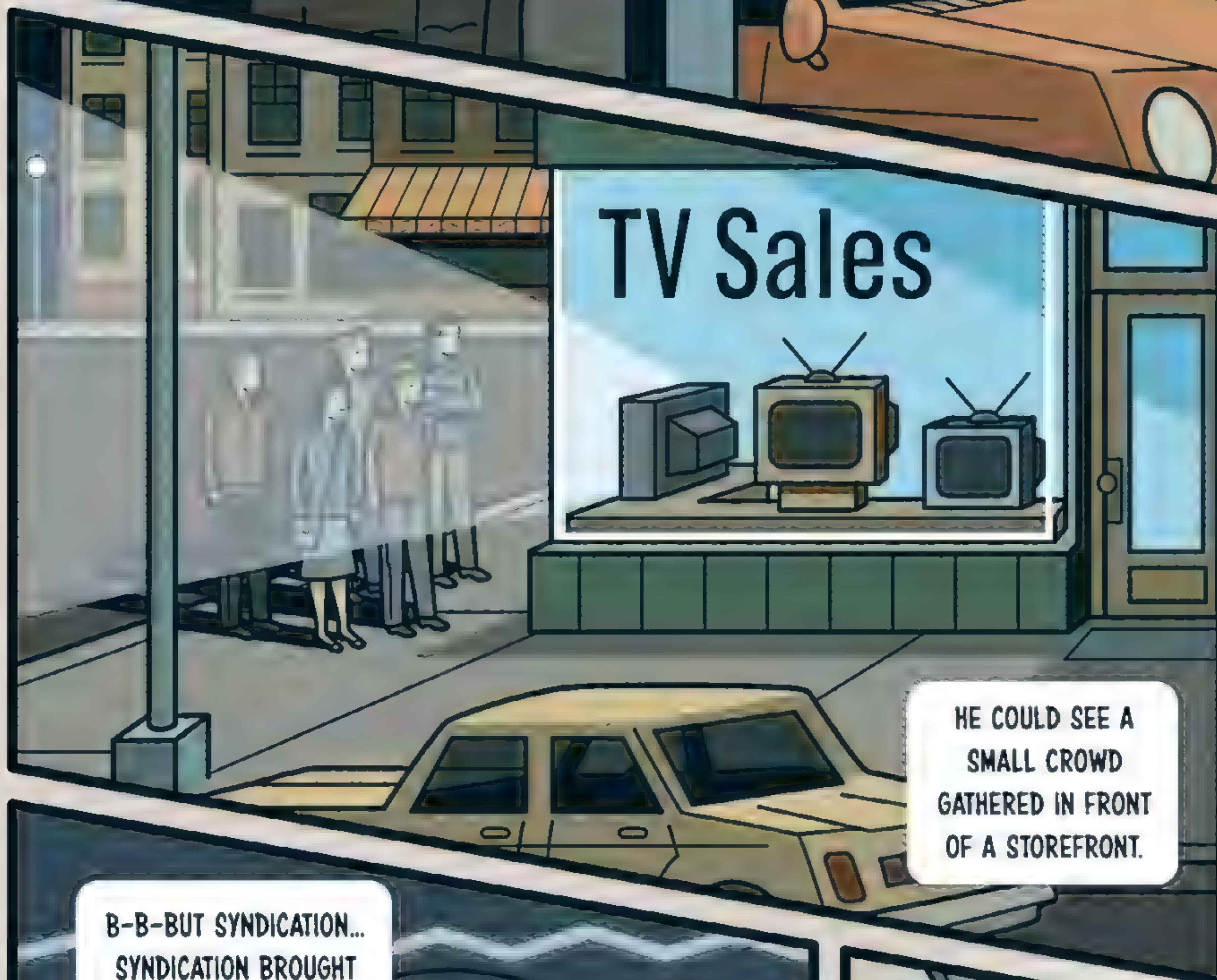


HE HELD  
THE DOOR  
FOR HER,  
AND SHE  
SMILED  
AT HIM.





HE WALKED PAST  
THE NEWSSTAND, UP  
TO THE MAIN DRAG.



HE COULD SEE A  
SMALL CROWD  
GATHERED IN FRONT  
OF A STOREFRONT.



IT WAS AN INTERVIEW WITH ALAN HALE JR.  
HE WAS TEARFULLY RECOUNTING HIS  
THREE SEASONS ON GILLIGAN'S ISLAND.



B-B-BUT SYNDICATION...  
SYNDICATION BROUGHT  
US BACK. IT WAS A  
MIRACLE. WE WERE  
MORE POPULAR  
THAN EVER.



A POLICE CRUISER  
SLOWLY WENT BY.







THE CIGARETTE MAN STOPPED BY IN THE MORNING. HE OPENED THE MACHINE AND SLID FRESH PACKS INTO THE VERTICAL SLOTS.

I'LL BE BACK AT THE END OF THE WEEK.



JIM SELDOM HEARD MORE THAN "FILL IT UP" OR "CHECK THE OIL."



CUSTOMERS HAD NOTHING MORE TO SAY, AND THAT SUITED HIM FINE.



SOMETIMES AFTER WORK, JIM WOULD SEE OLIVIA. SHE MUST HAVE GOTTEN AN APARTMENT IN HIS NEIGHBORHOOD.



HE HADN'T SPOKEN TO HER SINCE HE HAD RUN INTO HER AT THE BOOKSTORE. HE DOUBTED SHE WOULD REMEMBER ANYTHING MORE.



NOT ONLY WAS THE MOMENT OF DEATH ERASED FROM MEMORY...

...THE DAYS AND WEEKS LEADING UP TO IT WERE ALSO OBSCURED.

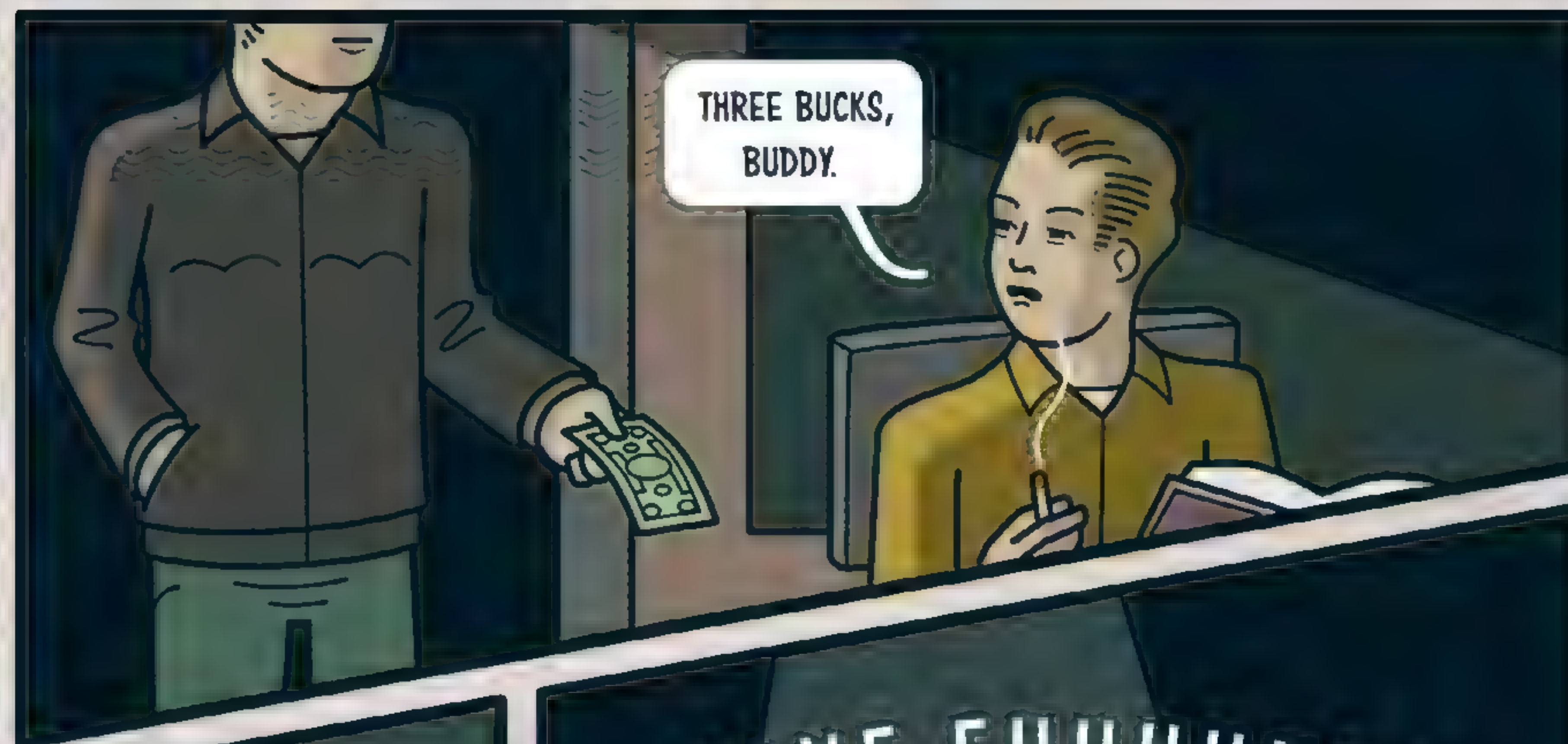


IT'S NOT THAT YOU COULDN'T REMEMBER THOSE DAYS. IT WAS JUST THAT THEY WERE ALL JUMBLED UP.





ONE NIGHT, JIM WALKED OVER TO THE ECHO. HE HADN'T BEEN THERE IN A WHILE. THE SAME GUY SAT AT THE DOOR, LOOKING BORED.



THREE BUCKS, BUDDY.



IRIS WAS ONSTAGE SINGING "GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN" IN A FUNERARY TEMPO.



IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE IRONIC--LIKE CABARET.

JIM GLANCED OVER. WANDA HAD SAT DOWN NEXT TO HIM.



SHE SANG IN A DEEP VOICE, LIKE NICO, WITH HER EYES CLOSED TIGHT.



AFTER A FEW MORE SONGS, JIM SAID GOODNIGHT TO WANDA AND WALKED OUT.



ROBERT HAZARD. THAT'S THE GUY THAT WROTE "GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN." IT WAS HIS ONLY BIG HIT.

FROM PHILLY.

FUCKIN' PHILLY.



AS HE TURNED  
DOWN HIS STREET,  
A SEDAN PULLED UP.

IT WAS HIS P.O.,  
AND HE WAVED  
JIM OVER.

HE MOTIONED FOR  
JIM TO GET IN.

YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED  
THAT WE'VE HAD YOU  
UNDER SURVEILLANCE.

YOU MEAN THE TWO GUYS OUTSIDE  
MY BUILDING? IF YOU WANT TO LOOK  
THROUGH MY PLACE AGAIN, FEEL FREE.

IT WAS LATE  
AND EVEN THE  
TRAFFIC HAD  
SLOWED DOWN.

WHEN WE COLLARED EDDIE  
AND LINDA'S OPERATION,  
WE LEARNED SOME THINGS.  
BUT THERE WERE STILL  
A FEW OTHER THINGS THAT  
I NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT...  
MEANING YOU, JIM.

I WASN'T INVOLVED  
WITH EDDIE. HE WAS  
EXTORTING ME...

YOU'RE A CONNECTOR.  
AND I HAD TO FIND OUT  
WHICH SIDE YOU WERE ON.

DON'T WORRY. WHILE  
YOU WERE AT WORK,  
WE DID JUST THAT.

SCREEEEEE





I'M ON MY SIDE.  
AND I DON'T WANT  
TO BE INVOLVED  
WITH ANYONE ELSE.



THE GOOD NEWS IS  
YOU'RE NOT PROFITING  
FROM THESE CRIMINAL  
ELEMENTS. THAT I  
KNOW FOR SURE.

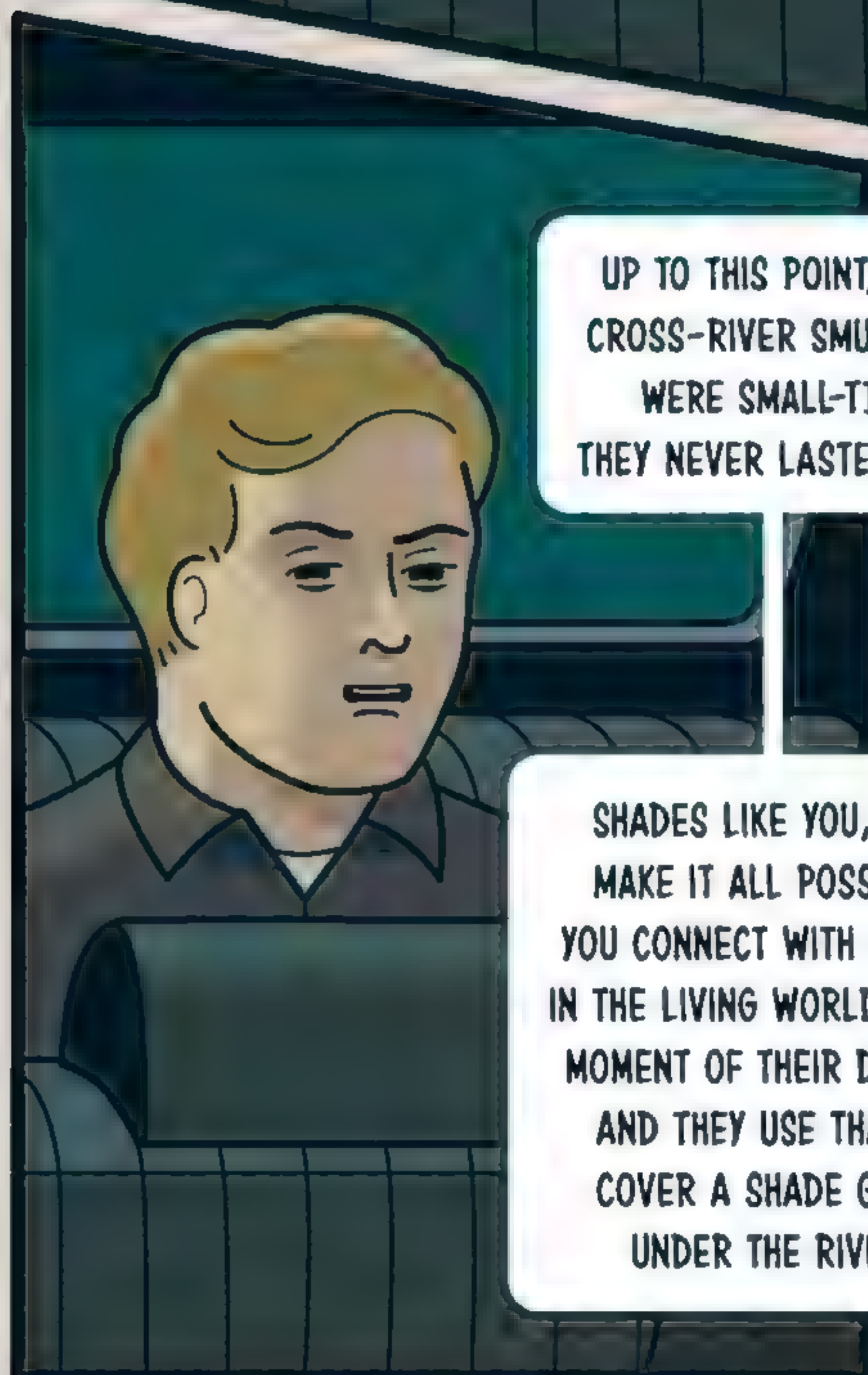
THE BAD NEWS IS,  
YOU DON'T HAVE  
MUCH SAY ABOUT  
WHAT HAPPENS  
NEXT. BECAUSE...  
I NEED YOU.

HE QUICKLY JERKED  
THE CAR INTO A  
DIMLY LIT GARAGE.



THE METAL DOOR  
SLAMMED DOWN  
BEHIND THEM.

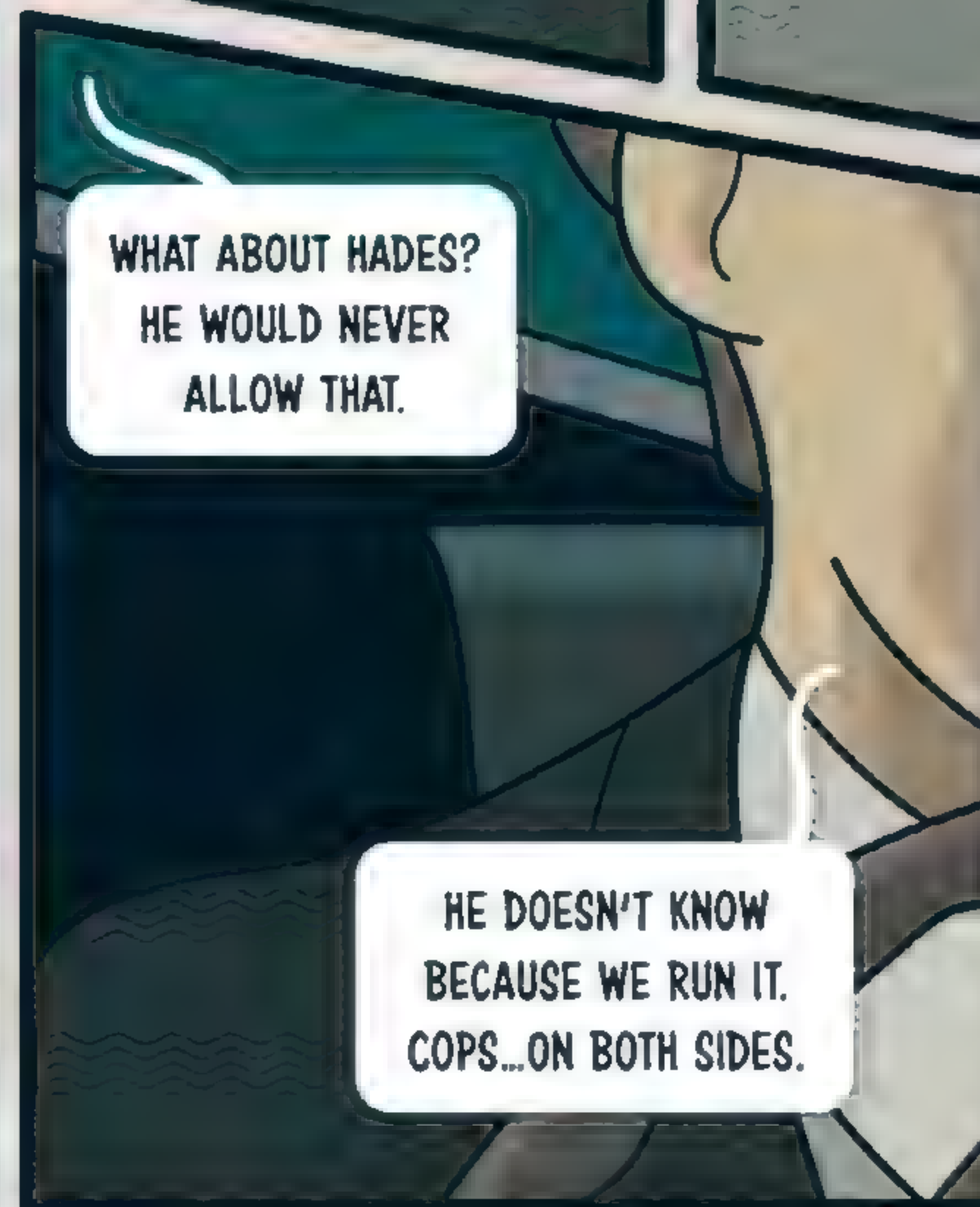
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED  
TO KNOW ABOUT THE A.L.P.D.  
WE HAVE AN ONGOING  
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE L.A.P.D.  
BASED ON SOME OVERLAPPING  
INTERESTS IN OUR  
RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS.



UP TO THIS POINT, MOST  
CROSS-RIVER SMUGGLERS  
WERE SMALL-TIME.  
THEY NEVER LASTED LONG.



SHADES LIKE YOU, JIM,  
MAKE IT ALL POSSIBLE.  
YOU CONNECT WITH PEOPLE  
IN THE LIVING WORLD AT THE  
MOMENT OF THEIR DEATHS,  
AND THEY USE THAT TO  
COVER A SHADE GOING  
UNDER THE RIVER.



WHAT ABOUT HADES?  
HE WOULD NEVER  
ALLOW THAT.

HE DOESN'T KNOW  
BECAUSE WE RUN IT.  
COPS...ON BOTH SIDES.

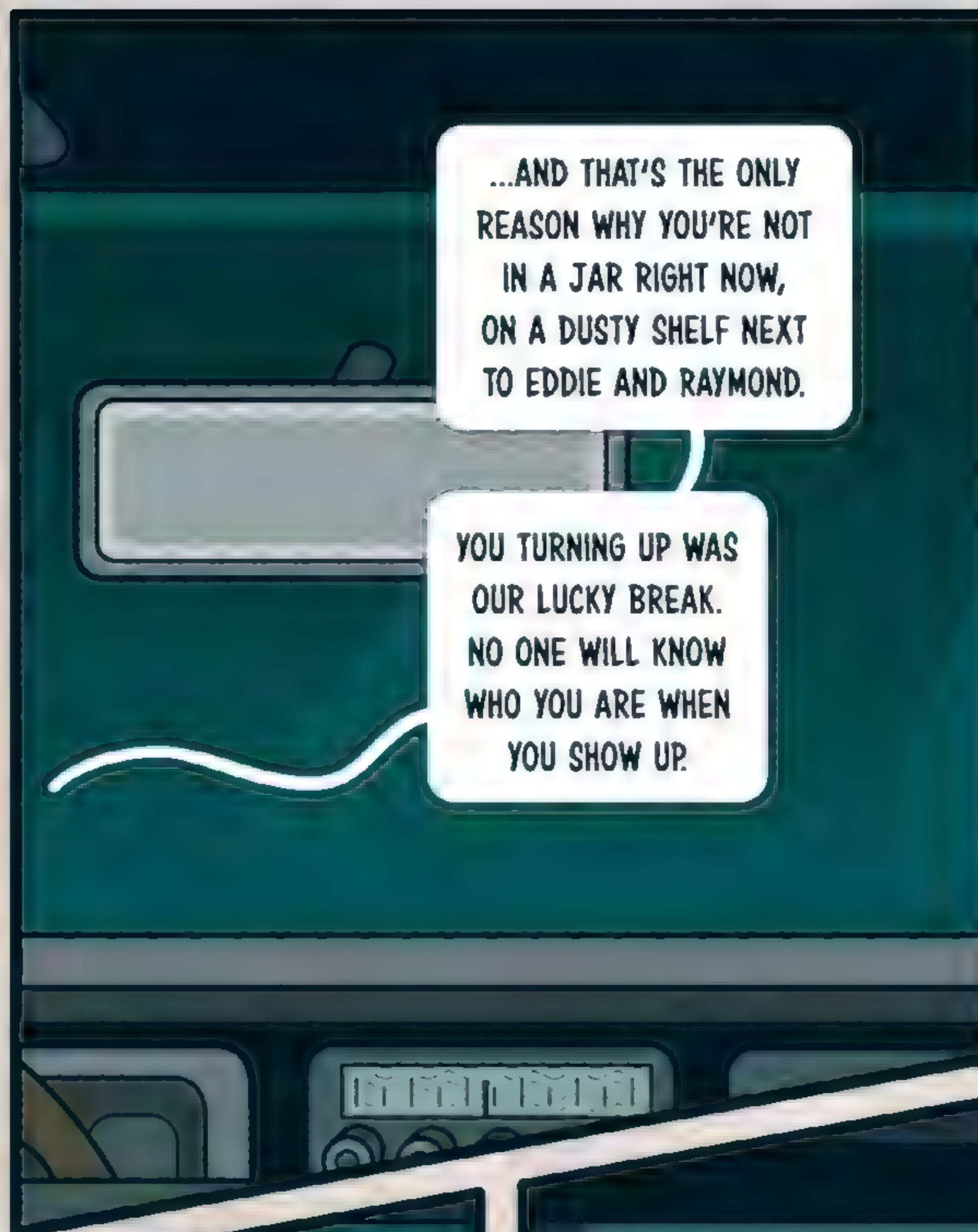


WE KEEP IT REGULATED  
AND DISCREET. IF HADES  
EVER FOUND OUT, WE'D  
ALL BE VAPED.





YOU'RE A STRONG CONNECTION, JIM.  
AND YOU'RE UNTAINTED. NO ONE  
KNOWS ABOUT YOU BECAUSE I KEPT  
YOUR NAME OUT OF IT...



...AND THAT'S THE ONLY  
REASON WHY YOU'RE NOT  
IN A JAR RIGHT NOW,  
ON A DUSTY SHELF NEXT  
TO EDDIE AND RAYMOND.

YOU TURNING UP WAS  
OUR LUCKY BREAK.  
NO ONE WILL KNOW  
WHO YOU ARE WHEN  
YOU SHOW UP.



WHEN I  
SHOW UP...  
WHERE?

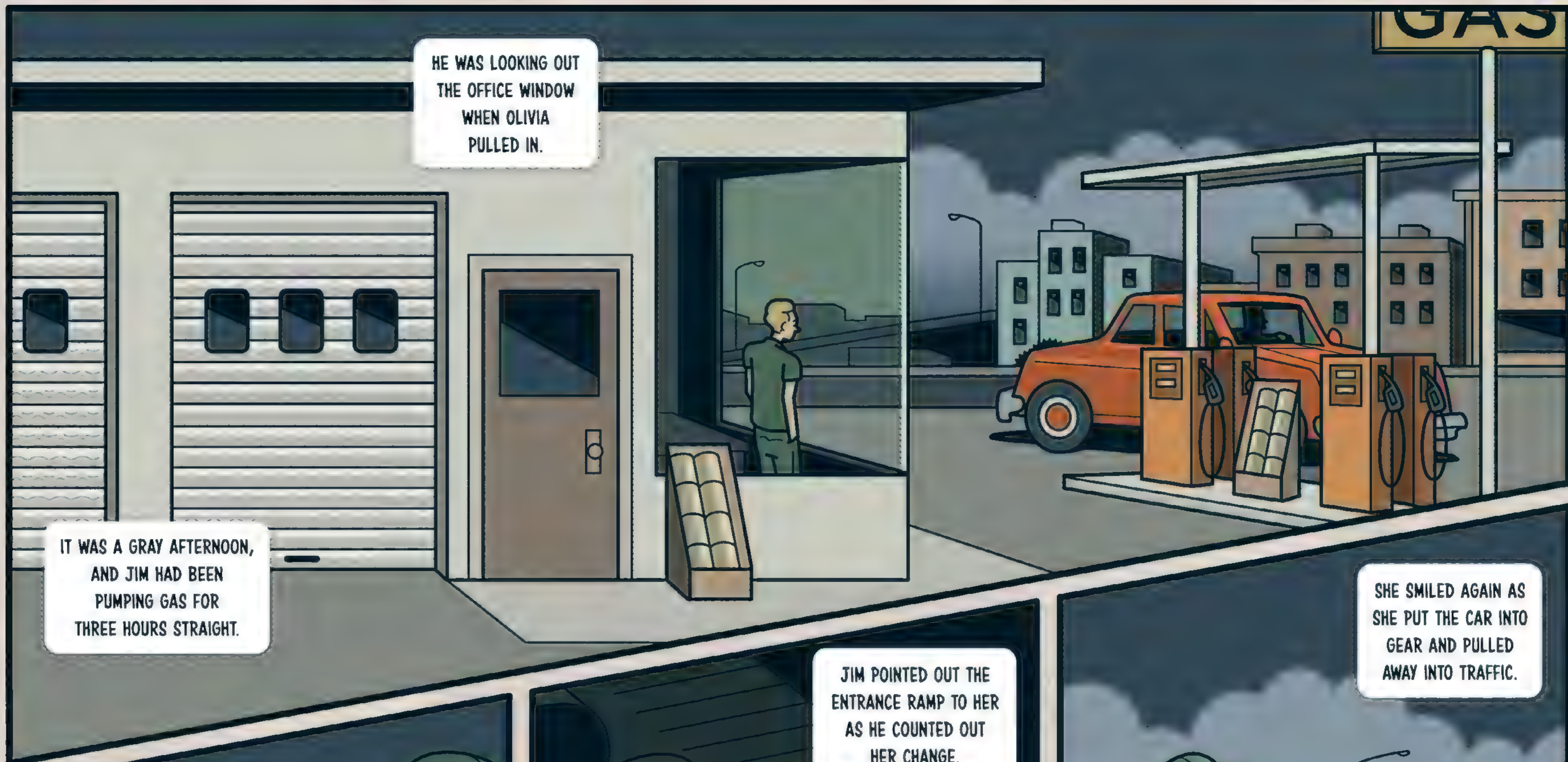


YOU'RE GOING BACK  
TO LOS ANGELES, TO  
RECONNECT THINGS  
FROM THAT END FOR US.  
WE'VE HAD SOME  
PERSONNEL PROBLEMS,  
AND YOU'RE THE  
CONNECTOR WHO CAN  
FIX THAT.



JIM LEANED BACK  
IN HIS SEAT AND  
LOOKED OUT AT THE  
LIT-UP EXIT SIGN  
ACROSS THE WAY.  
IT LOOKED VERY  
FAR AWAY.





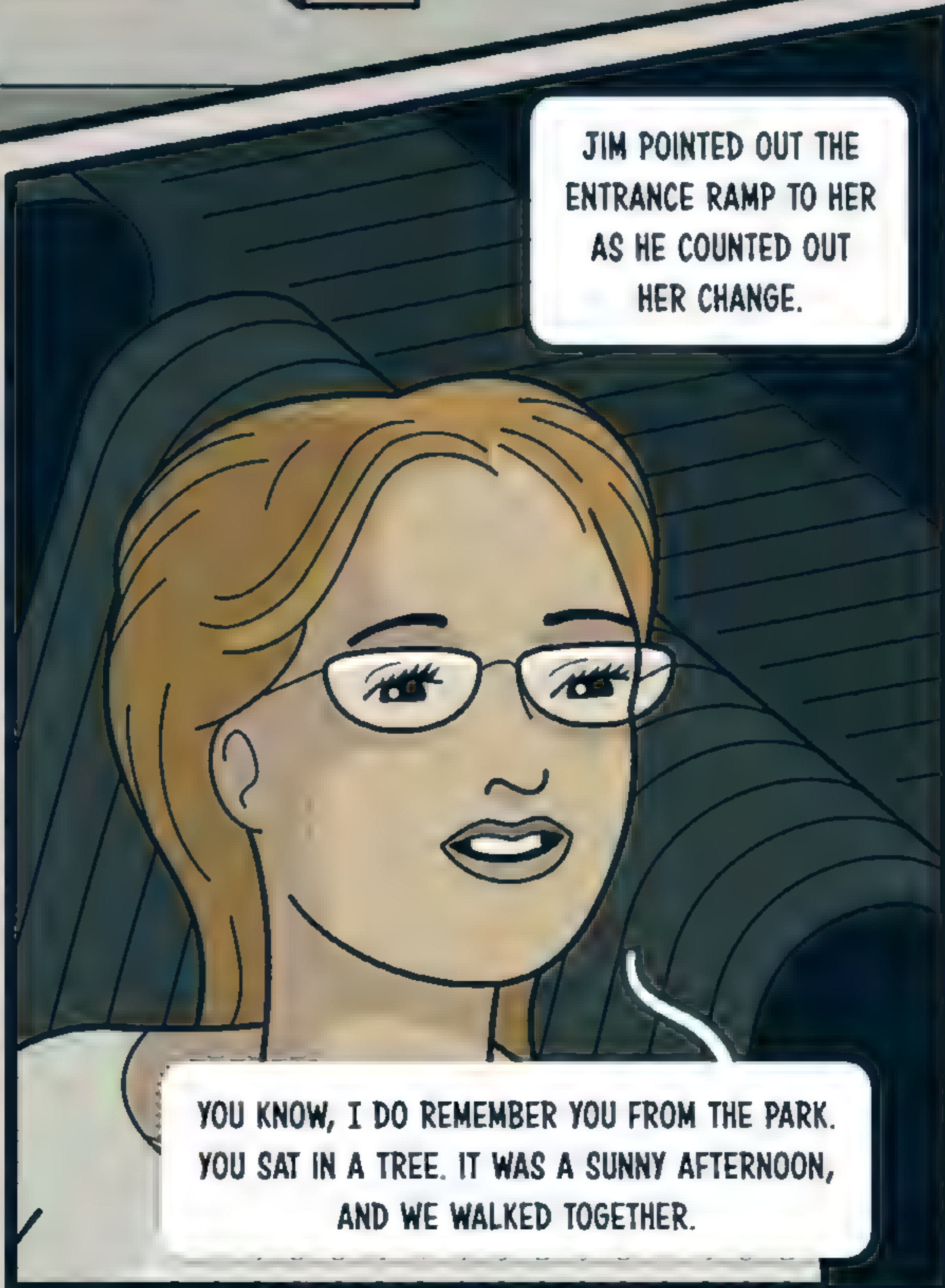
HE WAS LOOKING OUT  
THE OFFICE WINDOW  
WHEN OLIVIA  
PULLED IN.

IT WAS A GRAY AFTERNOON,  
AND JIM HAD BEEN  
PUMPING GAS FOR  
THREE HOURS STRAIGHT.



SHE LEANED HER HEAD OUT  
AND ASKED WHERE  
THE ENTRANCE TO THE  
FREEWAY WAS.

I'M STILL SORTA  
FIGURING MY  
WAY AROUND.



JIM POINTED OUT THE  
ENTRANCE RAMP TO HER  
AS HE COUNTED OUT  
HER CHANGE.

YOU KNOW, I DO REMEMBER YOU FROM THE PARK.  
YOU SAT IN A TREE. IT WAS A SUNNY AFTERNOON,  
AND WE WALKED TOGETHER.



SHE SMILED AGAIN AS  
SHE PUT THE CAR INTO  
GEAR AND PULLED  
AWAY INTO TRAFFIC.

JIM WAS STUNNED.  
SHE REMEMBERED  
HIM FROM BEFORE.



HE HADN'T NOTICED THAT A CAR  
HAD PULLED UP ALONGSIDE HIM AS  
HE WATCHED OLIVIA'S CAR FADE  
INTO THE SEA OF TRAFFIC.

HE THEN HEARD  
THE FAMILIAR  
VOICE OF HIS P.O.

IT'S FIVE O'CLOCK.  
NOW GET IN THE CAR.

ON THEIR WAY  
TO VENICE BEACH.

YOU NEVER  
MET CARLA,  
DID YOU?

CARLA AND LINDA WERE  
INTERCHANGEABLE. BUT CARLA,  
I KEPT OFF THE BOOKS. HER  
RECORD IS CLEAN AND THAT  
MAKES HER IDEAL FOR YOU.

THERE WERE TWO CONNECTORS  
BEFORE YOU. THE FIRST  
DISAPPEARED TWO MONTHS AGO.  
THE SECOND ONE CAME BACK  
LAST WEEK AS A SHADE.

THE DOOR OPENED  
PARTWAY, AND CARLA  
LOOKED OUT AT THEM.

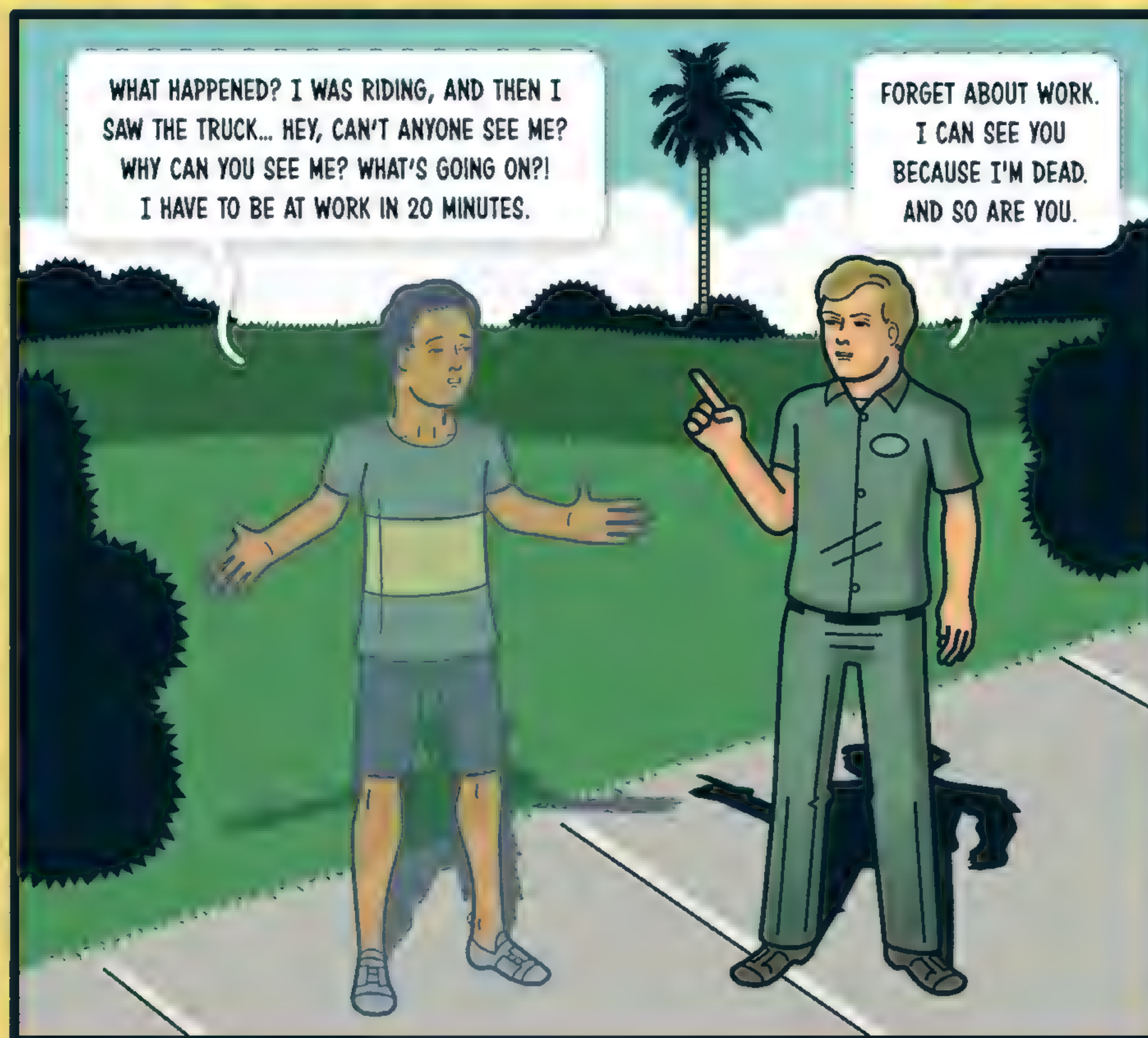
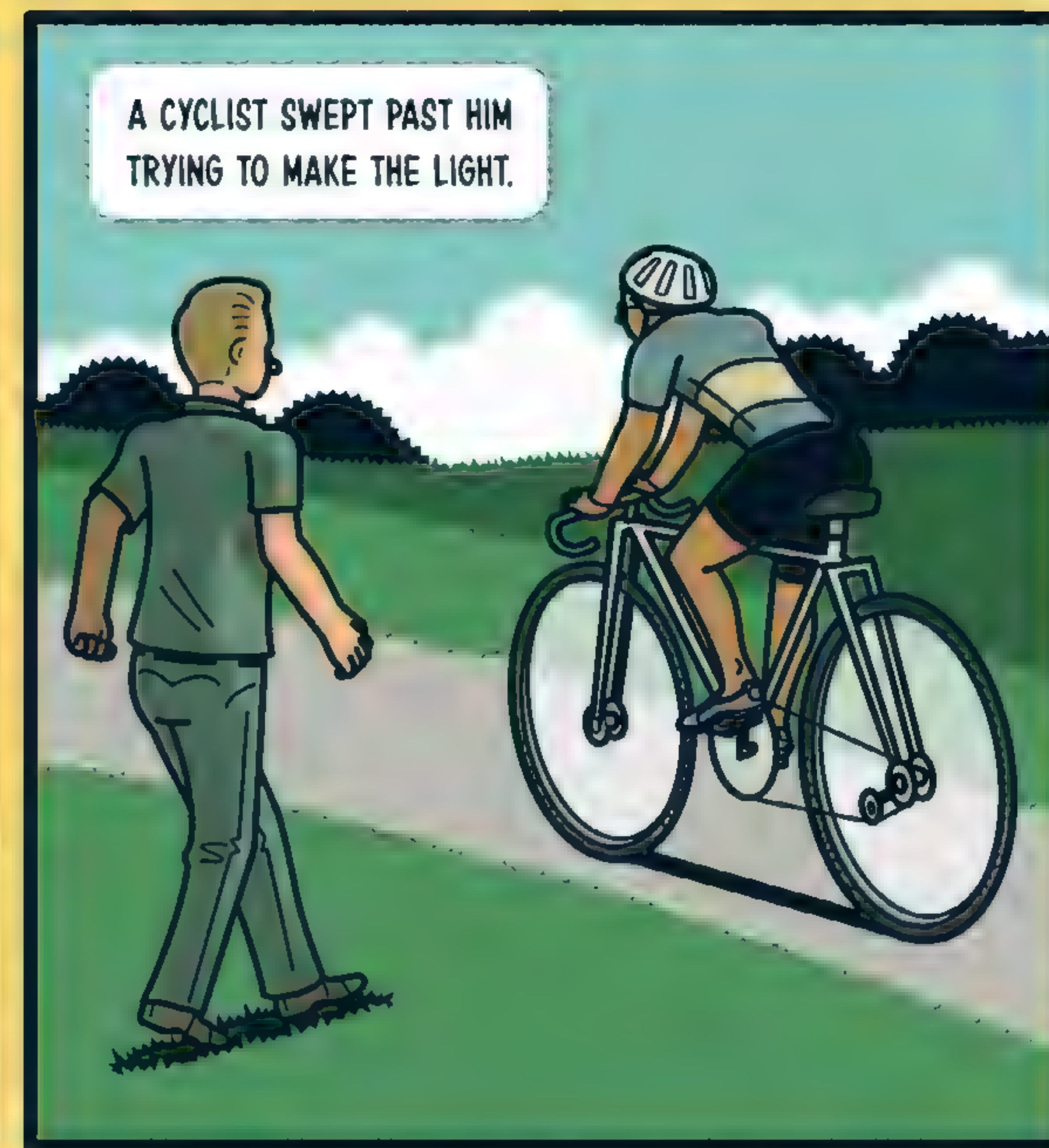
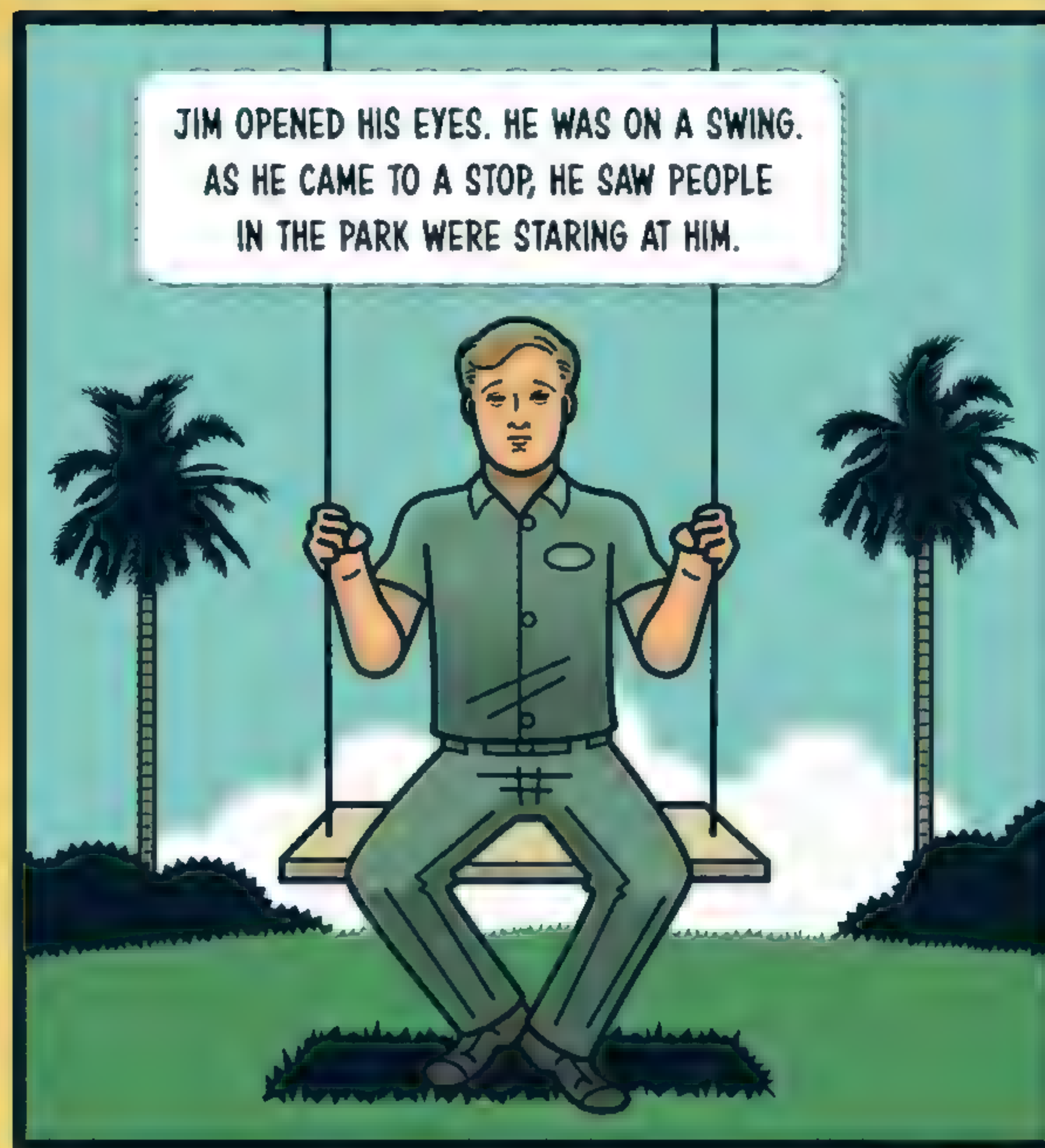
NOW WE KNOW THE FIRST ONE  
IS STILL THERE, AND ONE OF  
YOUR JOBS WILL BE TO FIND HER.

YOU'LL GO UNDER  
THE RIVER AND LOOK  
FOR THE DECEASED.  
IT WILL BE UP TO YOU  
TO MAKE CONTACT.  
AND GET BACK  
IN ONE PIECE.

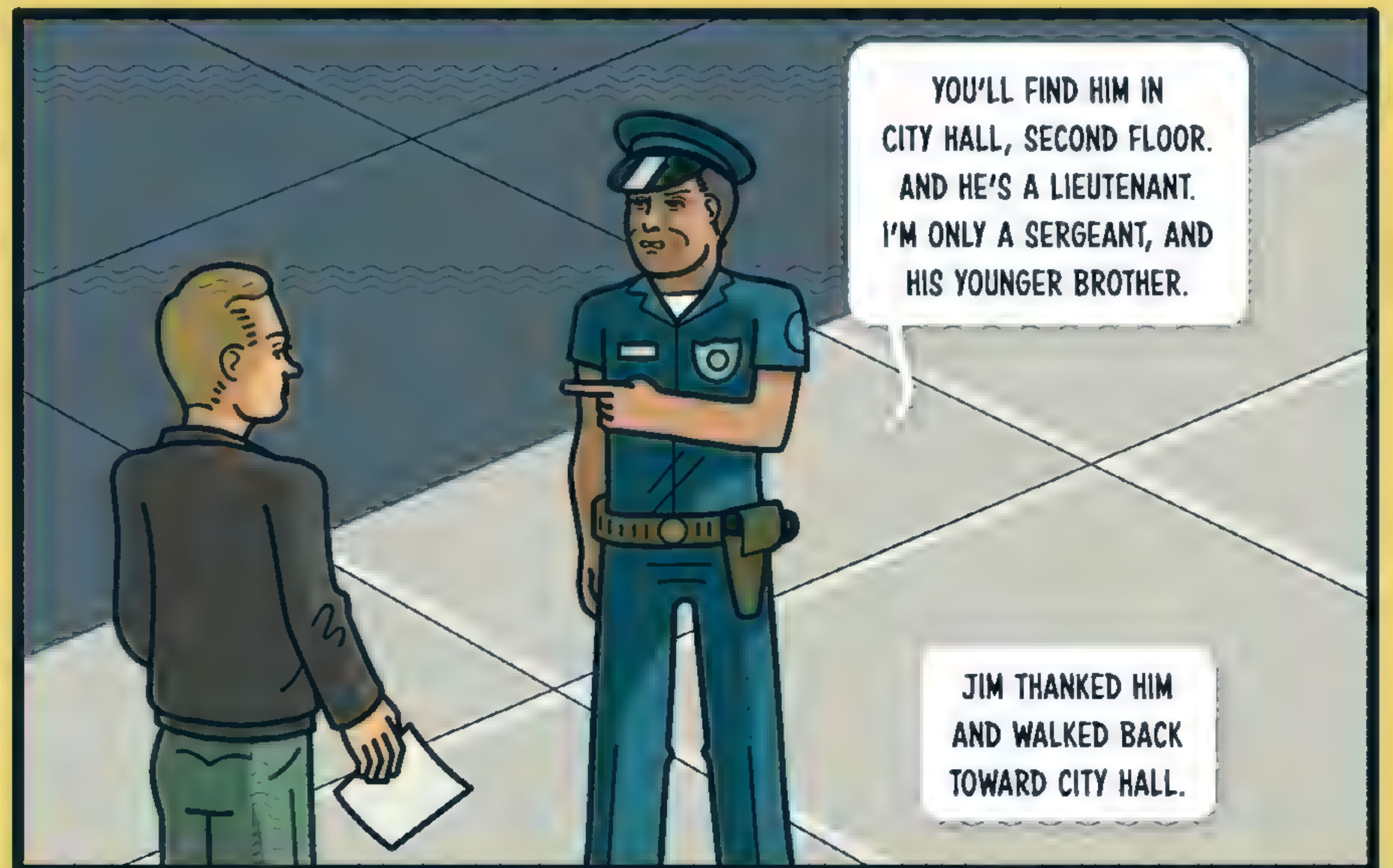
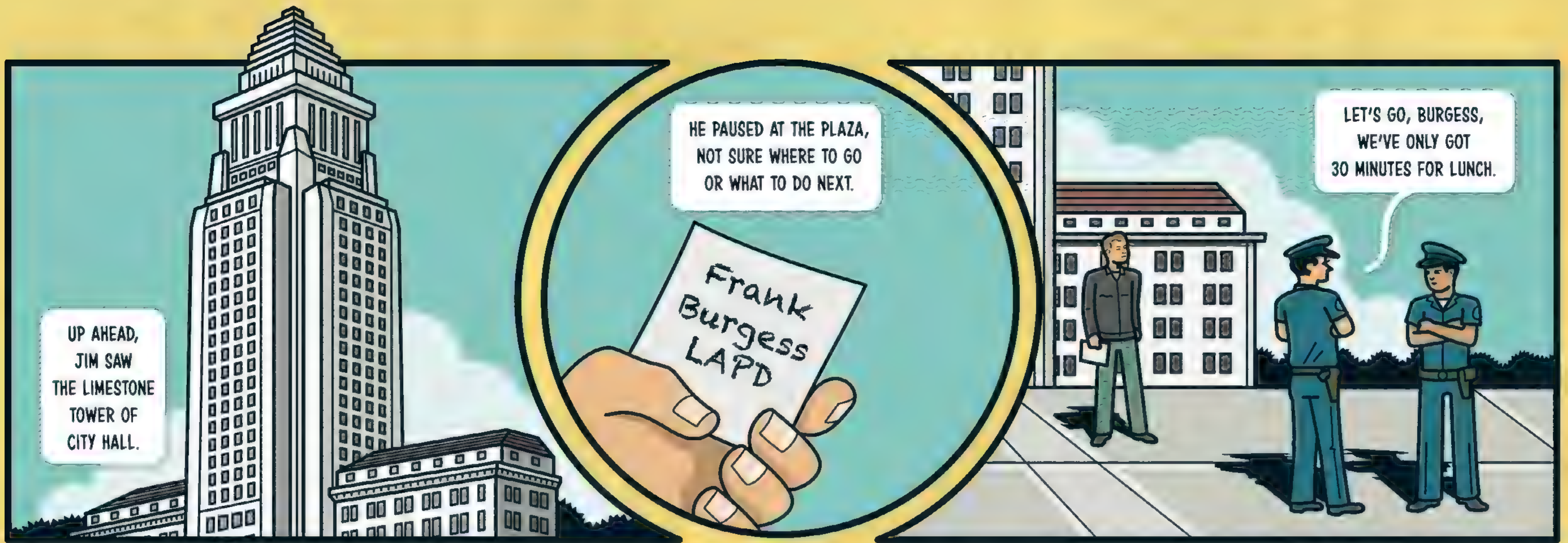
GET WHAT YOU NEED,  
AND GET OUT. IT'S  
DANGEROUS FOR US  
IF YOU STAY TOO LONG.  
THEY CAN PICK UP  
YOUR SIGNAL.

THE CRYSTAL BALL  
PULSED AND THE  
ROOM WENT DARK.

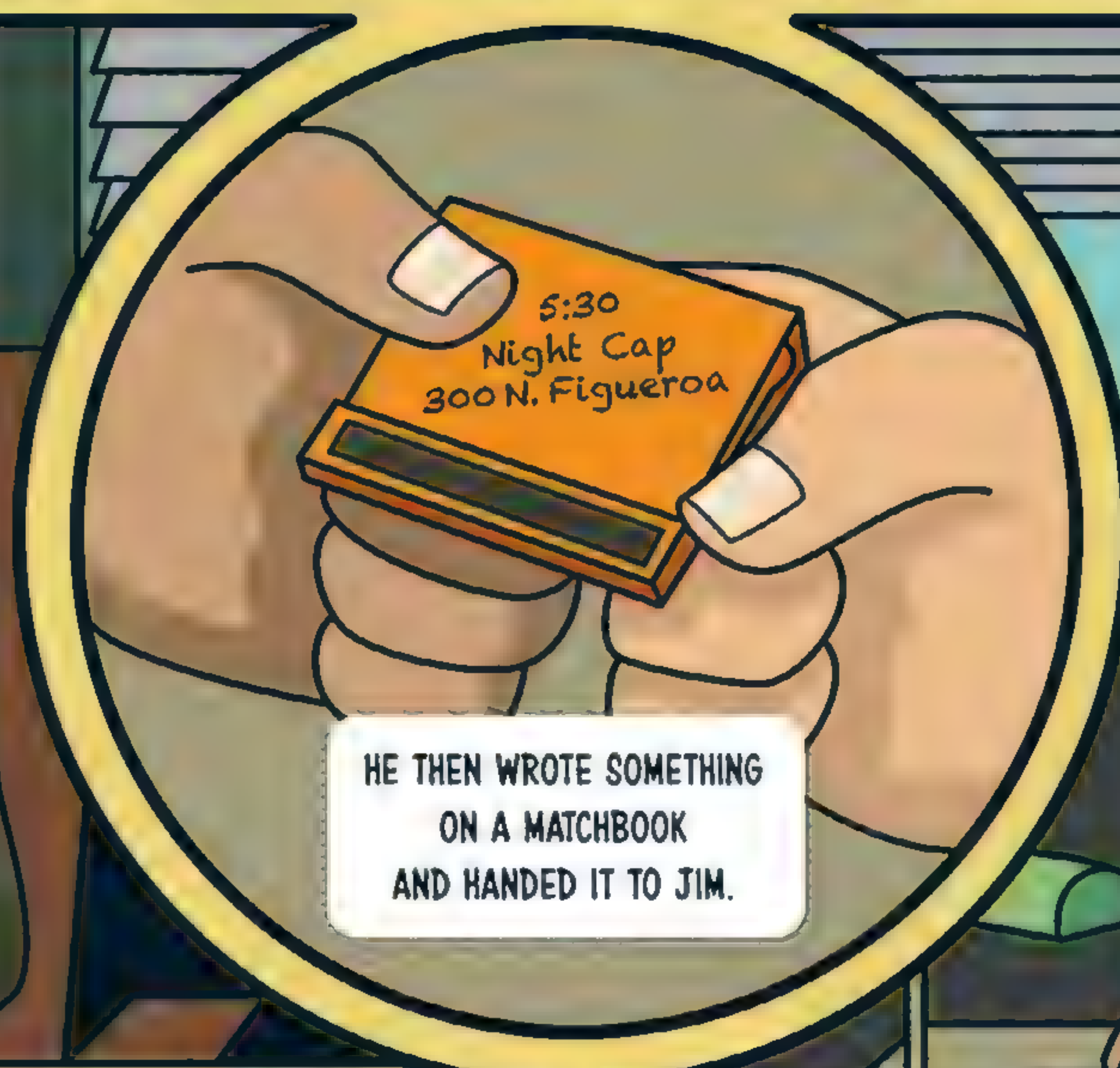
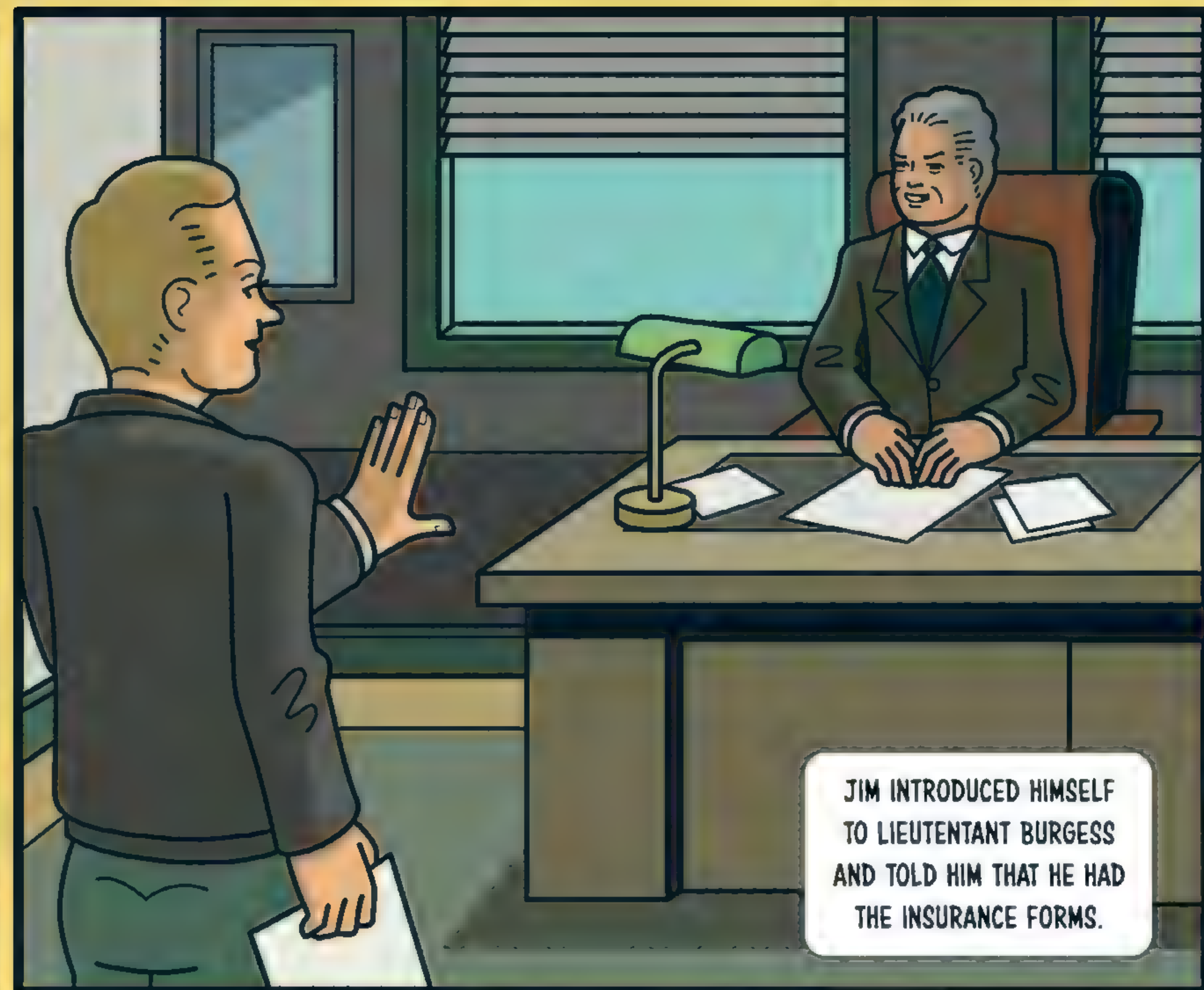
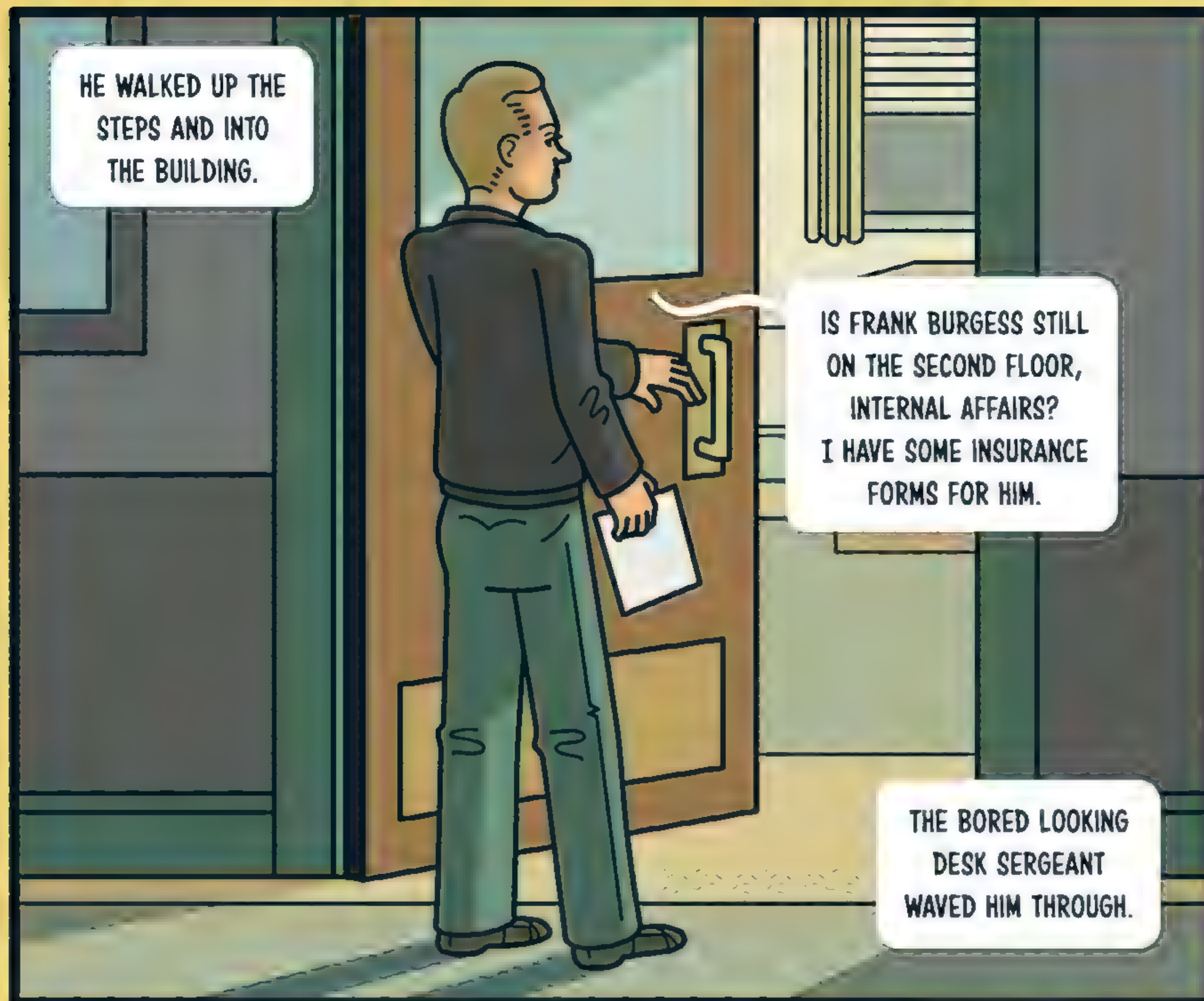














5:30. BURGESS  
WAS ALREADY  
THERE.

WE WERE PARTNERS.  
ROBBERY DIVISION.  
HE SAVED MY LIFE...  
PUSHED ME OUT OF THE  
WAY IN A SHOOTOUT.  
HE TOOK THE BULLET  
INSTEAD OF ME.

HE  
ORDERED  
DRINKS.

HE HAD 500 COPS AT HIS FUNERAL,  
AS WELL AS HIS WIDOW AND THREE KIDS.  
WHEN HE GOT BACK IN TOUCH  
WITH ME...I AGREED TO HELP.

HE HAD ME SET UP A NONPROFIT, WHICH  
WE'D USE AS A FRONT TO SMUGGLE SHADES.  
IT'S CALLED C.H.A.R.O.N.--COMMUNITY HEALTH  
AND RESOURCES OPPORTUNITY NETWORK.

SOME FINANCIAL COMPANIES  
HELPED BANKROLL IT THROUGH  
LARGE CHARITABLE DONATIONS.

THE MISSION? COMMUNITY-BASED DEBT COUNSELING.  
C.H.A.R.O.N. TAKES FOLKS WHO ARE UP TO THEIR  
NECKS IN DEBT AND HELPS STRAIGHTEN THEM OUT,  
WHILE ALSO PROVIDING THEM WITH LIFE INSURANCE.  
IT'S ALL UNDERWRITTEN BY BANKS, WANTING TO  
SHOW WHAT GOOD CORPORATE CITIZENS THEY ARE.

THERE'S OVERSIGHT, BUT IT ONLY LOOKS AT WHERE THE  
MONEY GOES... THE PEOPLE? NOBODY CARES ABOUT THEM.  
IF THEY DIED, NO ONE WOULD MISS THEM... THAT'S WHAT  
MAKES THEM IDEAL VESSELS FOR BRINGING SHADES OVER.

WHEN THESE FOLKS DO DIE AND THEIR SHADE GETS UP  
AND LEAVES, ANOTHER SHADE CAN CROSS BACK FROM  
THE A.L., UNDETECTED...AS LONG AS IT'S TIMED RIGHT  
TO THE MOMENT OF DEATH.

THE INSURANCE PAYOUT PLEASURES THE  
BENEFICIARIES, SO NOBODY RAISES A STINK.  
AND THE SHADE IS HAPPY FOR A VACATION,  
SO WE GET PAID IN FULL.





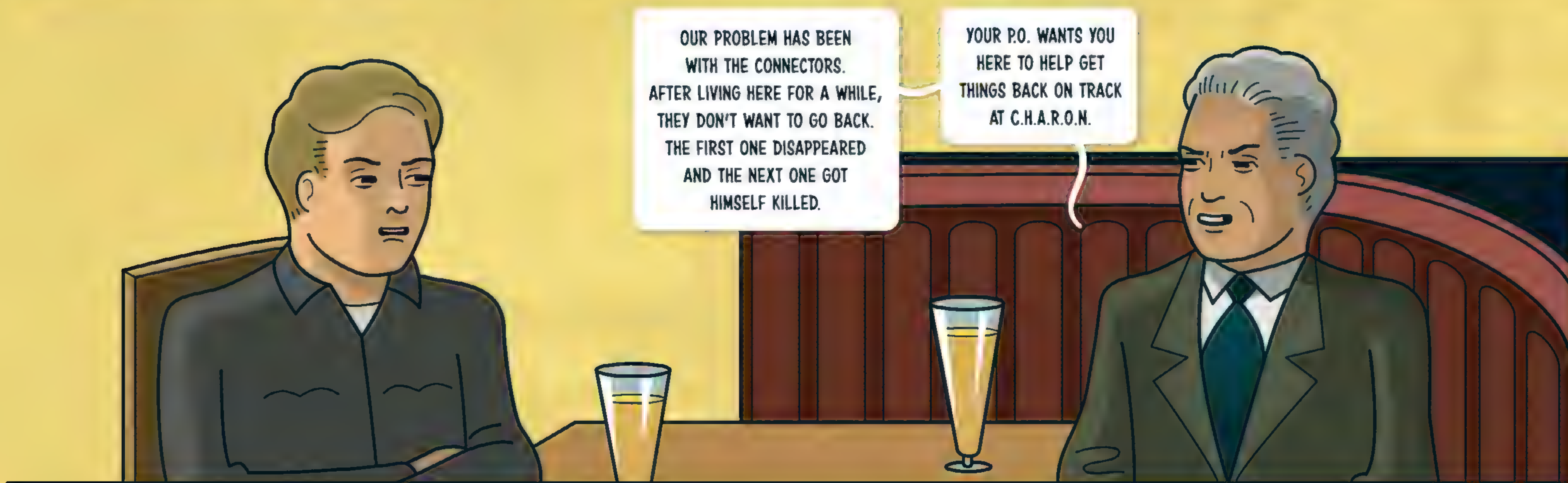
IN ORDER TO KEEP IT OFF THE BOOKS HERE...  
WE USE CONNECTORS TO DO ALL THE FINALIZING...



...AT THE MOMENT OF THE CLIENT'S DEATH, THEIR SHADE  
DEPARTS TO THE A.L. THE CONNECTOR THEN GUIDES  
A SHADE FROM THE A.L. BACK TO THE LIVING WORLD.  
UNDER THE RIVER, SO TO SPEAK...



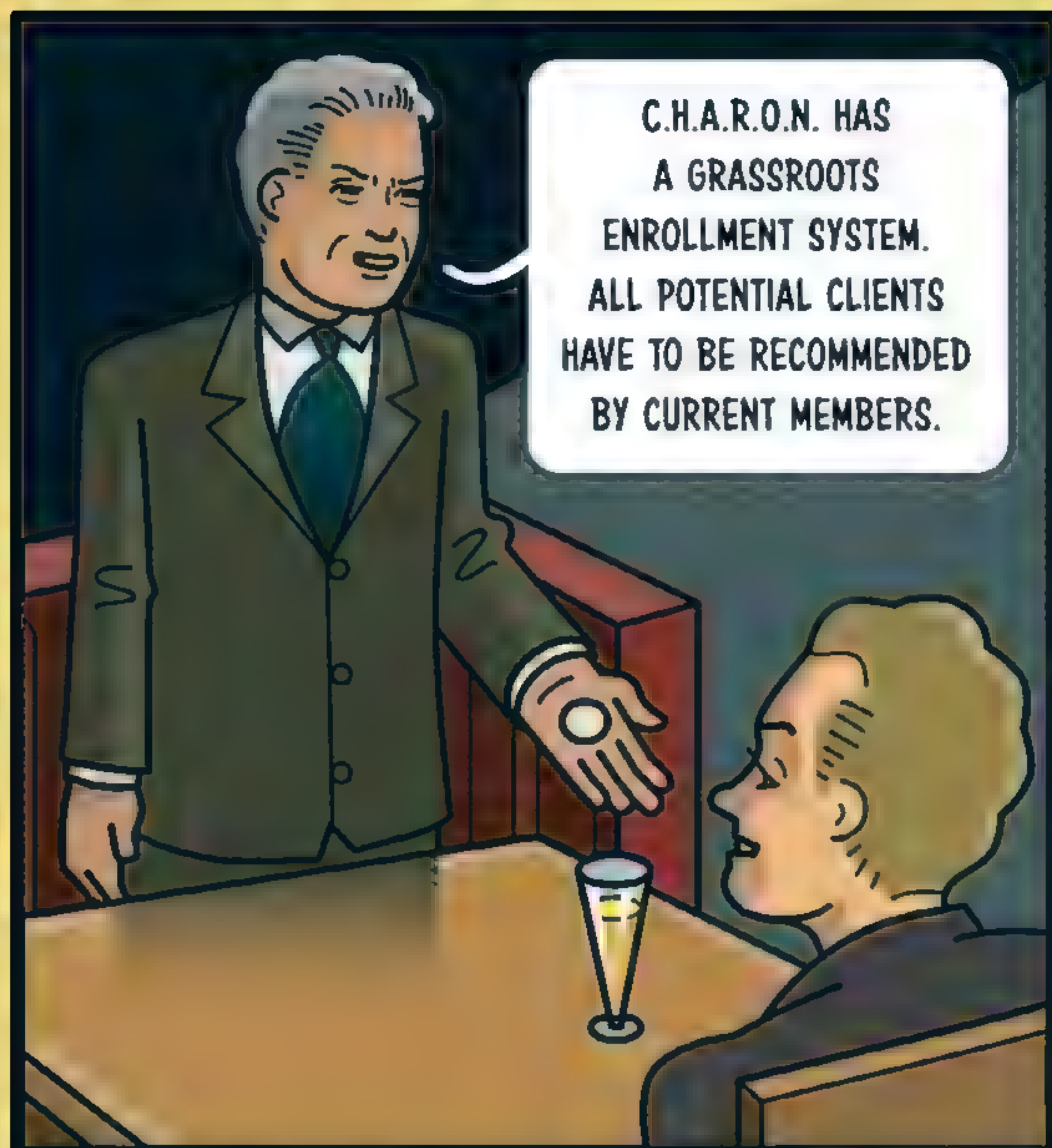
...WHEN OUR NEWLY DECEASED  
ARRIVES IN THE A.L. THEY  
HAVE NO MEMORY OF WHAT  
JUST HAPPENED TO THEM.  
IT ALL WORKS OUT FINE.



OUR PROBLEM HAS BEEN  
WITH THE CONNECTORS.  
AFTER LIVING HERE FOR A WHILE,  
THEY DON'T WANT TO GO BACK.  
THE FIRST ONE DISAPPEARED  
AND THE NEXT ONE GOT  
HIMSELF KILLED.

YOUR P.O. WANTS YOU  
HERE TO HELP GET  
THINGS BACK ON TRACK  
AT C.H.A.R.O.N.





C.H.A.R.O.N. HAS  
A GRASSROOTS  
ENROLLMENT SYSTEM.  
ALL POTENTIAL CLIENTS  
HAVE TO BE RECOMMENDED  
BY CURRENT MEMBERS.



AS HE GOT UP TO LEAVE,  
BURGESS TOOK OUT A  
SILVER COIN AND GAVE  
IT TO JIM.



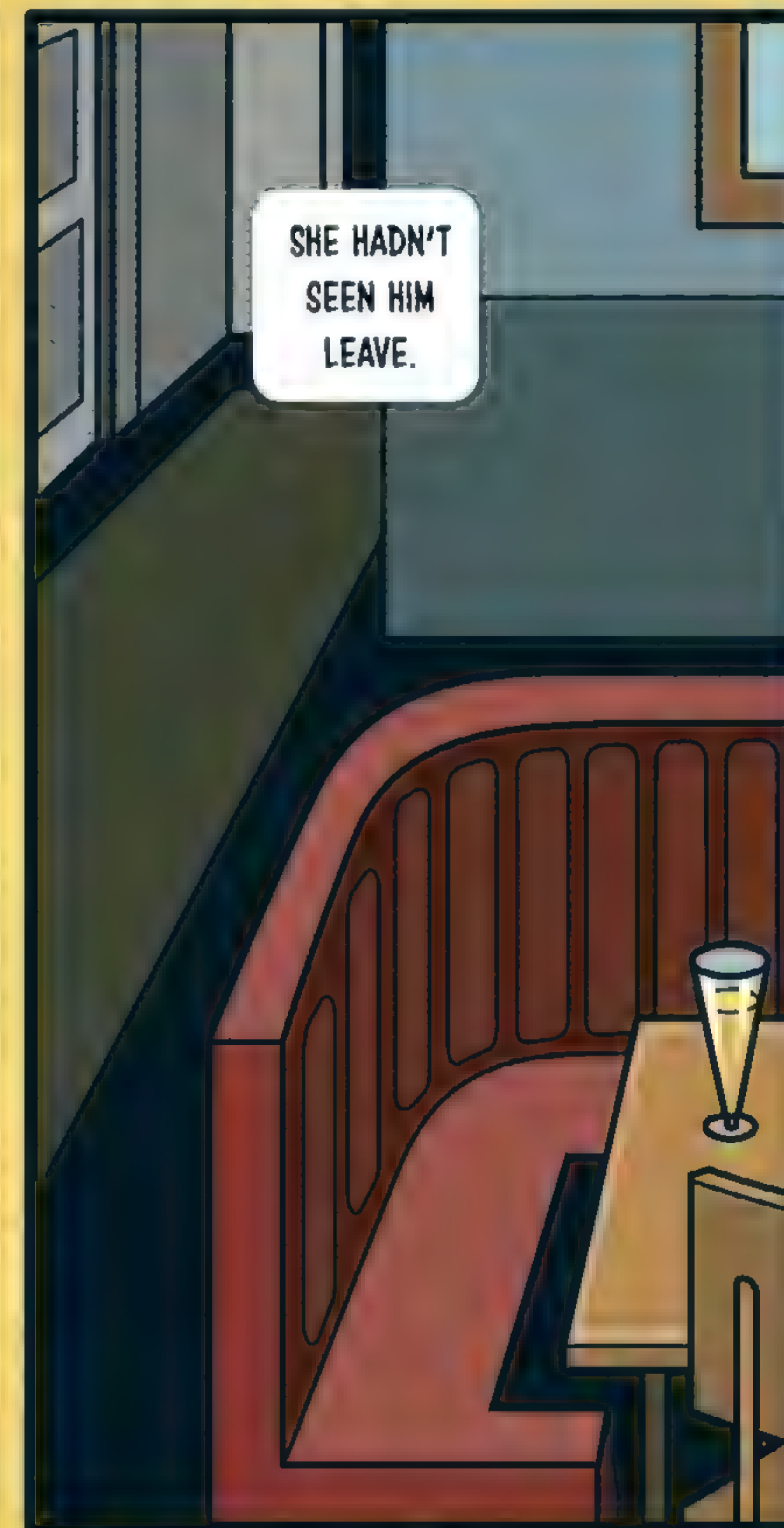
THIS COIN IS THE TOKEN FOR  
ADMITTANCE. CAROL ROSS IS THE  
MEMBER WHO RECOMMENDED YOU.  
SHE'S THE CONNECTOR WHO'S  
GONE A.W.O.L.



IN A FEW MINUTES, THE WAITRESS  
CAME OVER TO SEE IF JIM WANTED  
ANOTHER BEER.



SHE  
LOOKED  
PUZZLED.

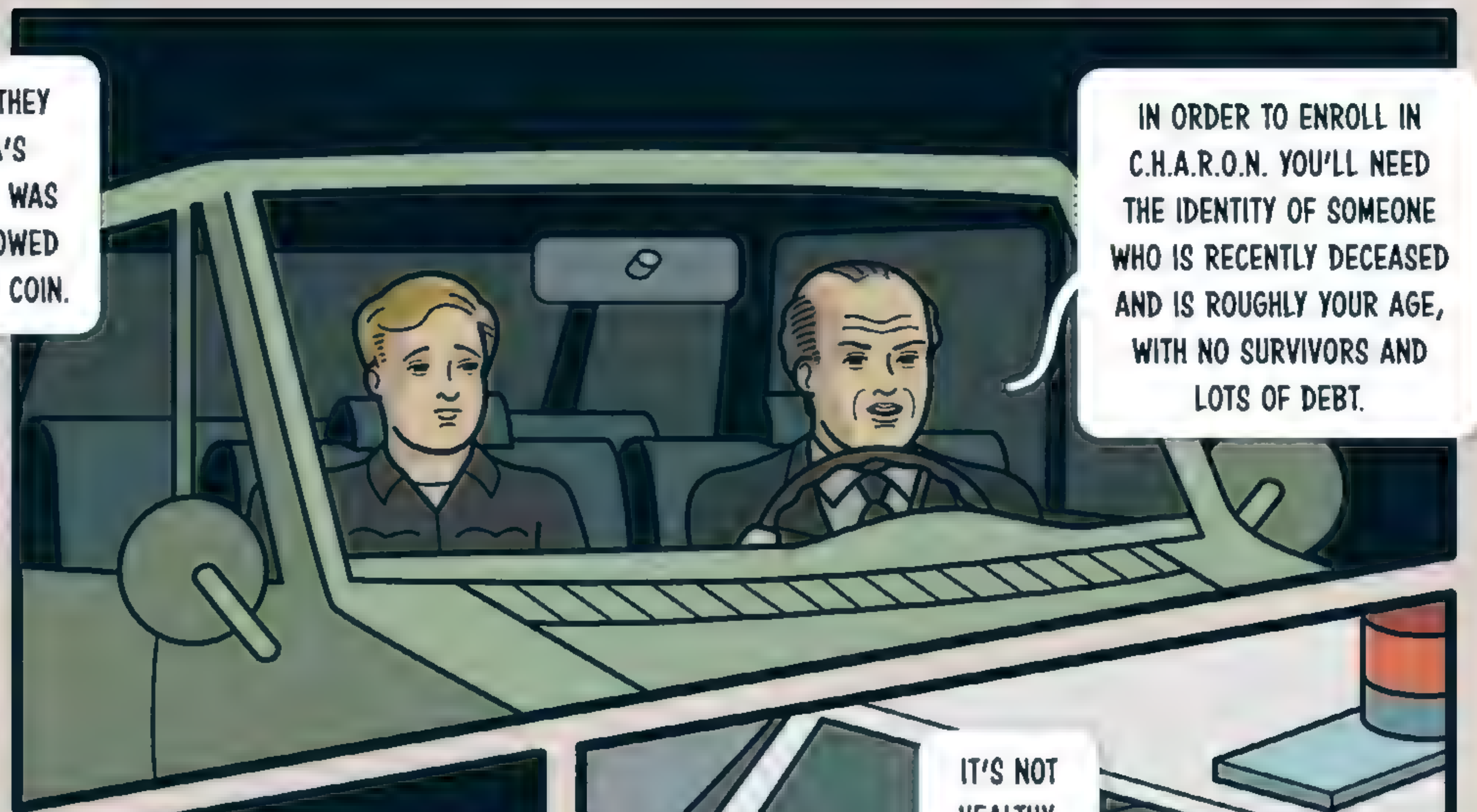


SHE HADN'T  
SEEN HIM  
LEAVE.



# CHAPTER 13

BY THE TIME THEY  
LEFT CARLA'S  
BUNGALOW, IT WAS  
DARK. JIM SHOWED  
HIM THE SILVER COIN.



IN ORDER TO ENROLL IN  
C.H.A.R.O.N. YOU'LL NEED  
THE IDENTITY OF SOMEONE  
WHO IS RECENTLY DECEASED  
AND IS ROUGHLY YOUR AGE,  
WITH NO SURVIVORS AND  
LOTS OF DEBT.



JIM WENT BACK TO HIS  
REGULAR JOB. IT WAS HARD  
TO CONCENTRATE WITH ALL  
THE DETAILS RUNNING  
AROUND IN HIS HEAD.



HE WALKED HOME AFTER WORK  
AND WAS STOPPED BY THE POLICE.

WHY ARE YOU  
OUT SO LATE?



IT'S NOT  
HEALTHY,  
MISTER.

THE FOLLOWING EVENING THE P.O.  
WAS WAITING FOR HIM. HE  
GOT IN, AND THEY DROVE OFF.



HE HEADED TO A BAR AND  
SAT WITH HIS EMPTY GLASS AND  
THOUGHT ABOUT HOW STRANGE  
IT HAD FELT BEING BACK THERE.



YOU'LL STAY LONGER  
THIS TIME, 48 HOURS.



HIS P.O. SLID A MANILA ENVELOPE ACROSS THE SEAT.  
"ROGER JARVIS, AGE 32, UNEMPLOYED MARKETING  
EXECUTIVE, LIVED IN AN APARTMENT IN NORTH HOLLYWOOD.  
HE DIED LAST NIGHT WITH \$23K IN CREDIT CARD DEBT  
AND TWO MONTHS PAST DUE ON HIS RENT."



THIS SHADE FITS  
OUR NEEDS.  
HIS '78 PORSCHE  
IS IN THE GARAGE,  
AWAITING PAYMENT ON  
A \$3,500 REPAIR BILL.  
...AND WE'VE ALTERED  
HIS DRIVER'S LICENSE  
WITH YOUR PHOTO  
SO YOU CAN TAKE  
HIS PLACE.



HE TOOK HIS OWN LIFE BY JUMPING  
OFF THE SANTA MONICA PIER AT  
2:15 A.M. HIS BODY IS CURRENTLY 16  
MILES OFFSHORE AND ATTRACTING  
A LOT OF ATTENTION FROM SHARKS.  
IN OTHER WORDS, NO ONE KNOWS  
HE'S GONE AND NO ONE CARES.



THE LONGER YOU  
STAY, THE MORE  
DANGEROUS IT IS.  
...FOR ALL OF US.



JIM WON'T STAY  
ANY LONGER THAN  
HE NEEDS TO---  
A FEW DAYS  
AT MOST.

CARLA GRUMBLED  
AS SHE SET OUT  
THE CRYSTAL BALL.



SHE  
BEGAN HER  
INCANTATION.



THE ROOM  
WENT DARK.



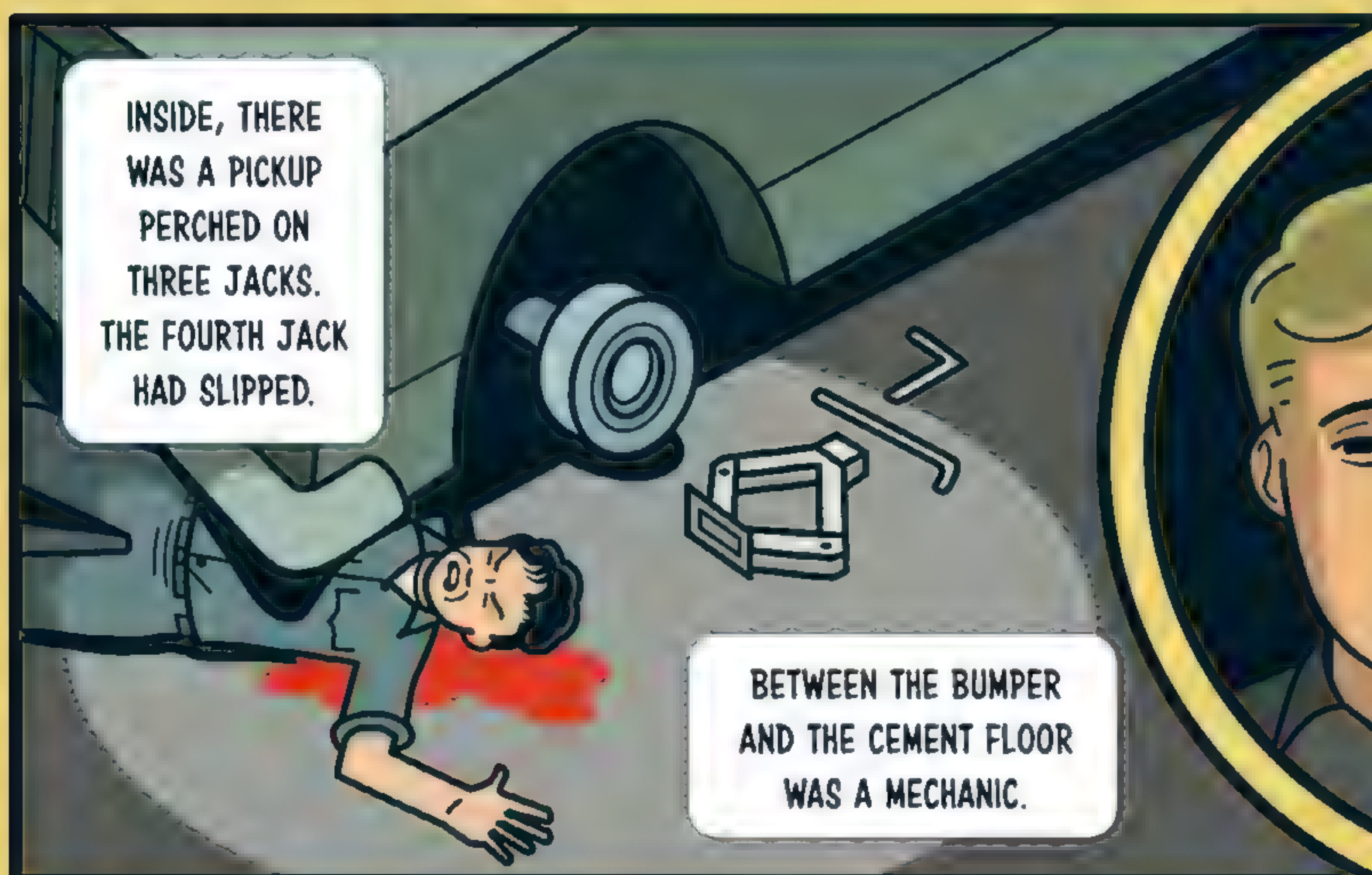




JIM OPENED HIS EYES.  
IT WAS STILL DARK, BUT  
NOW HE FELT THE NIGHT AIR.  
HE LOOKED AROUND AND  
SAW HE WAS ON A ROOF  
OF A REPAIR SHOP.



INSIDE, THERE  
WAS A PICKUP  
PERCHED ON  
THREE JACKS.  
THE FOURTH JACK  
HAD SLIPPED.



BETWEEN THE BUMPER  
AND THE CEMENT FLOOR  
WAS A MECHANIC.



SORRY ABOUT  
THE SLIP.  
I GUESS YOU  
CAN TELL  
IT'S ALL  
OVER.



MAN, IT'S BEEN OVER  
MY WHOLE DAMN LIFE.



THE MECHANIC WALKED OUT THROUGH THE  
CHAIN-LINK FENCE. JIM FOLLOWED HIM OUT.



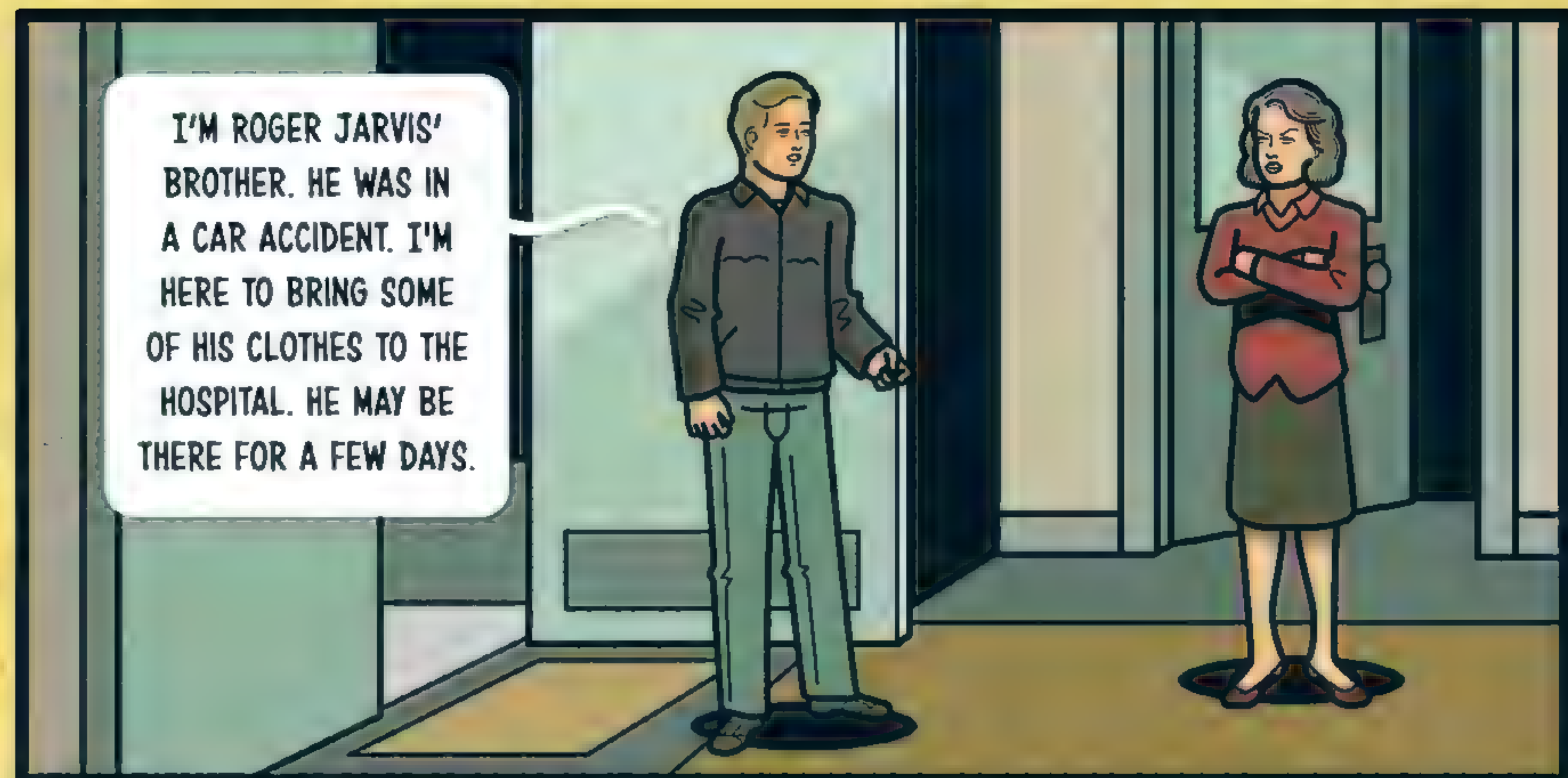
ANYWHERE IS  
BETTER THAN THIS.



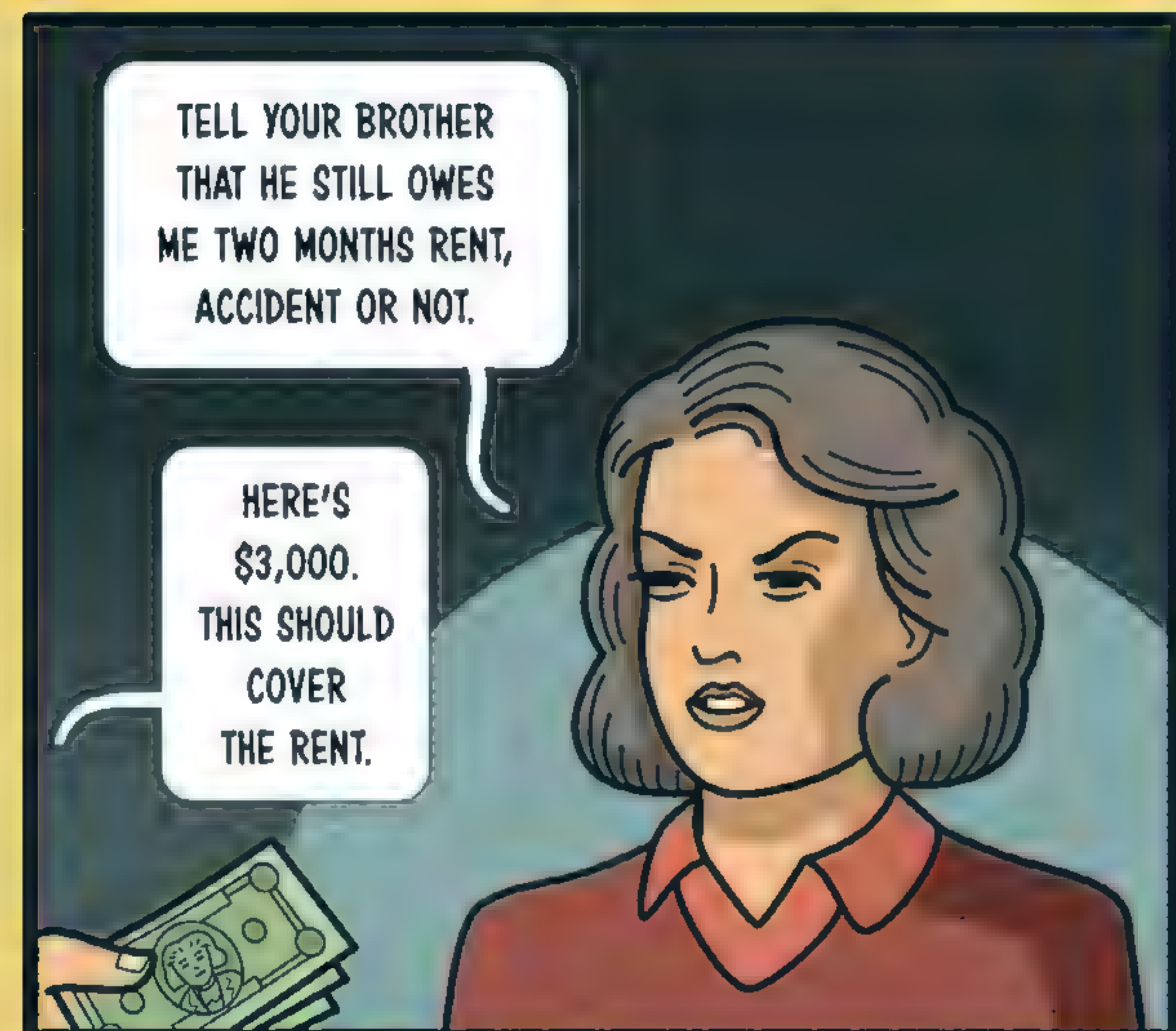


IT TOOK TWO HOURS  
TO WALK TO  
ROGER JARVIS'  
APARTMENT.

HE USED ROGER'S  
KEY AND ENTERED  
THE LOBBY. A  
WOMAN CAME OUT  
FROM A SMALL  
OFFICE AND  
CONFRONTED HIM.



I'M ROGER JARVIS'  
BROTHER. HE WAS IN  
A CAR ACCIDENT. I'M  
HERE TO BRING SOME  
OF HIS CLOTHES TO THE  
HOSPITAL. HE MAY BE  
THERE FOR A FEW DAYS.

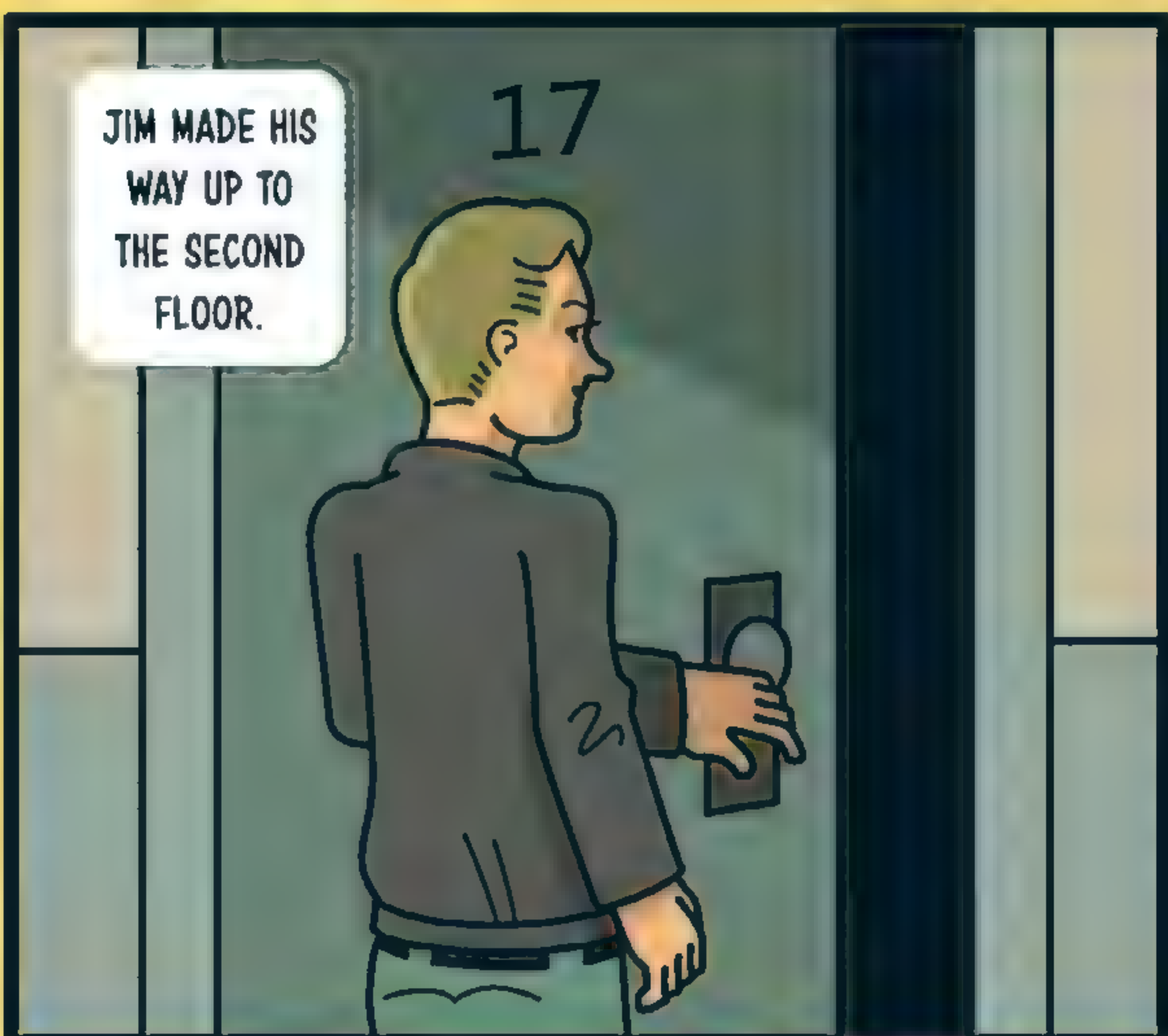


TELL YOUR BROTHER  
THAT HE STILL OWES  
ME TWO MONTHS RENT,  
ACCIDENT OR NOT.

HERE'S  
\$3,000.  
THIS SHOULD  
COVER  
THE RENT.



NEXT MONTH'S IS DUE ON THURSDAY...  
IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME WHO PAYS,  
AS LONG AS IT'S PAID IN FULL.



JIM MADE HIS  
WAY UP TO  
THE SECOND  
FLOOR.



THE BLINDS WERE  
DRAWN AND THERE  
WAS A MUSTY SMELL.  
EMPTY BOTTLES  
LINED THE COUNTER  
AND A STACK OF  
UNPAID BILLS.

A CAT SLINKED UP  
AGAINST HIS LEG  
AND MEOWED.

JIM FOUND A STASH  
OF CAT FOOD AND  
OPENED A CAN.  
SHE DEVoured  
HER MEAL.





HE TOOK OUT THE COIN THAT BURGESS  
HAD GIVEN HIM. HE TURNED IT  
AND LET THE LIGHT CATCH ITS EDGE.



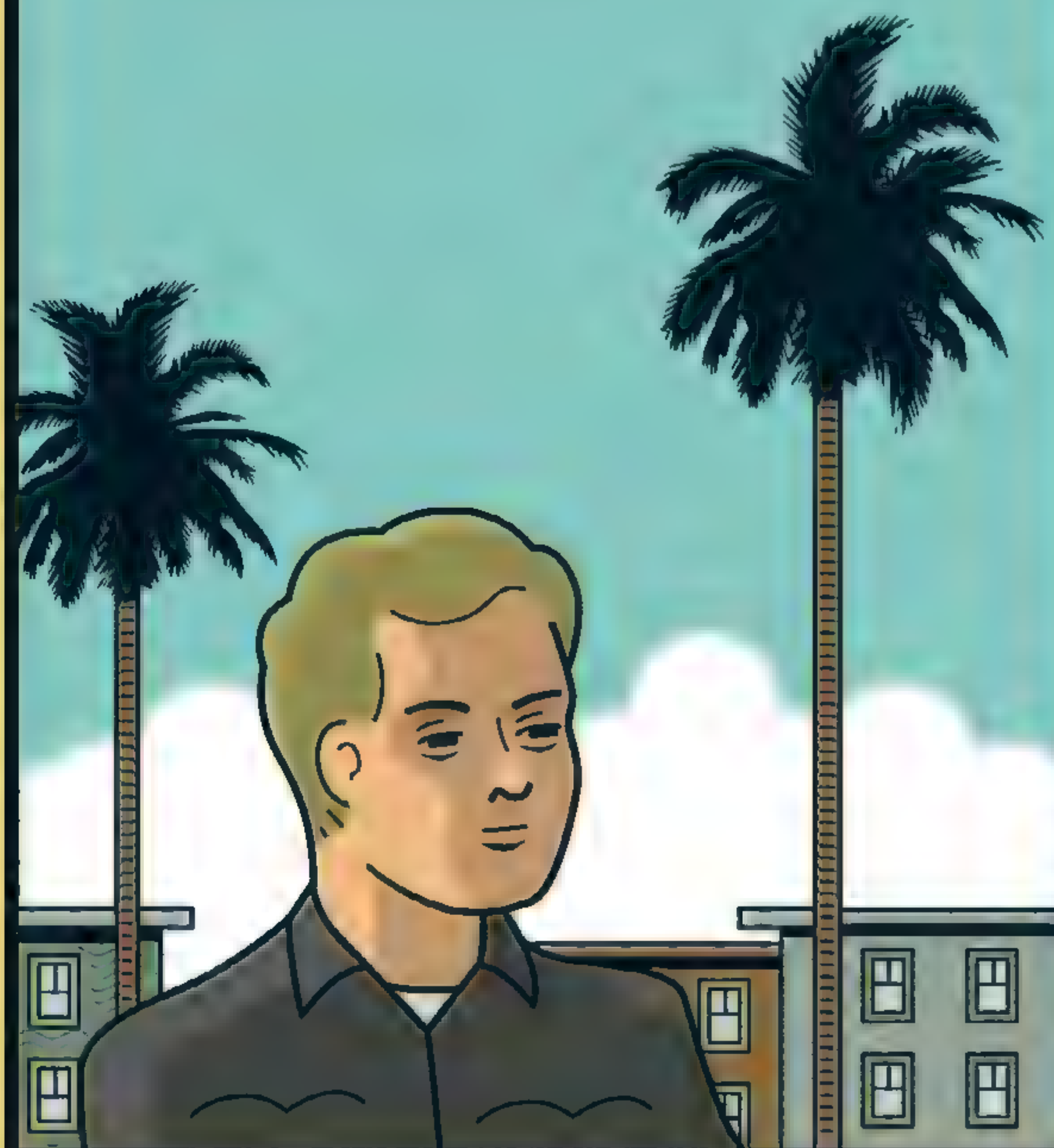
JIM SPENT THE REST OF THE  
DAY IN THE APARTMENT.  
HE TOOK OUT THE GARBAGE  
AND AIRED OUT THE PLACE.  
NOTHING TOO MUCH, IT  
WAS SUPPOSED TO LOOK  
DOWN AND OUT.



THE CAT LURKED ABOUT  
AS HE CLEANED UP.  
SHE SEEMED PLEASED  
TO HAVE COMPANY.



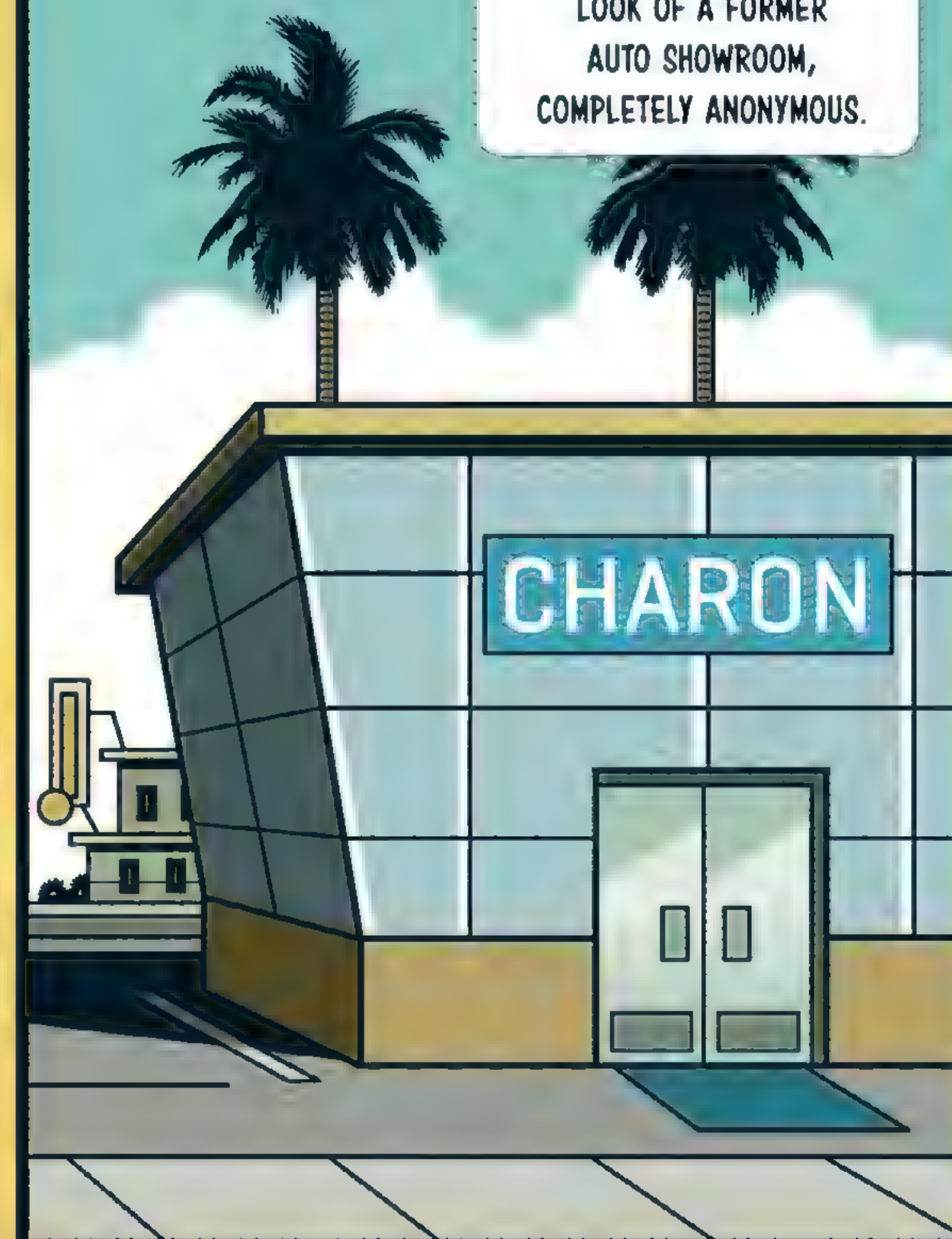
THE NEXT MORNING WAS SUNNY.  
HE OPENED UP A MAP AND  
PLOTTED HIS ROUTE TO  
THE C.H.A.R.O.N. OFFICES.



HE TOOK THE BUS  
TO MAKE IT MORE  
BELIEVABLE.



HE ARRIVED AN HOUR LATER  
AT THE OFFICE. IT HAD THE  
LOOK OF A FORMER  
AUTO SHOWROOM,  
COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS.







WELCOME TO THE  
**C.H.A.R.O.N.**  
**GROUP**

**C**OMMUNITY  
**H**EALTH  
**A**ND  
**R**ESOURCES  
**O**PPORTUNITY  
**N**ETWORK

THE DESK IN C.H.A.R.O.N.'S LOBBY  
WAS MANNED BY SMILING  
EMPLOYEES IN MATCHING POLO  
SHIRTS AND HEADSETS.



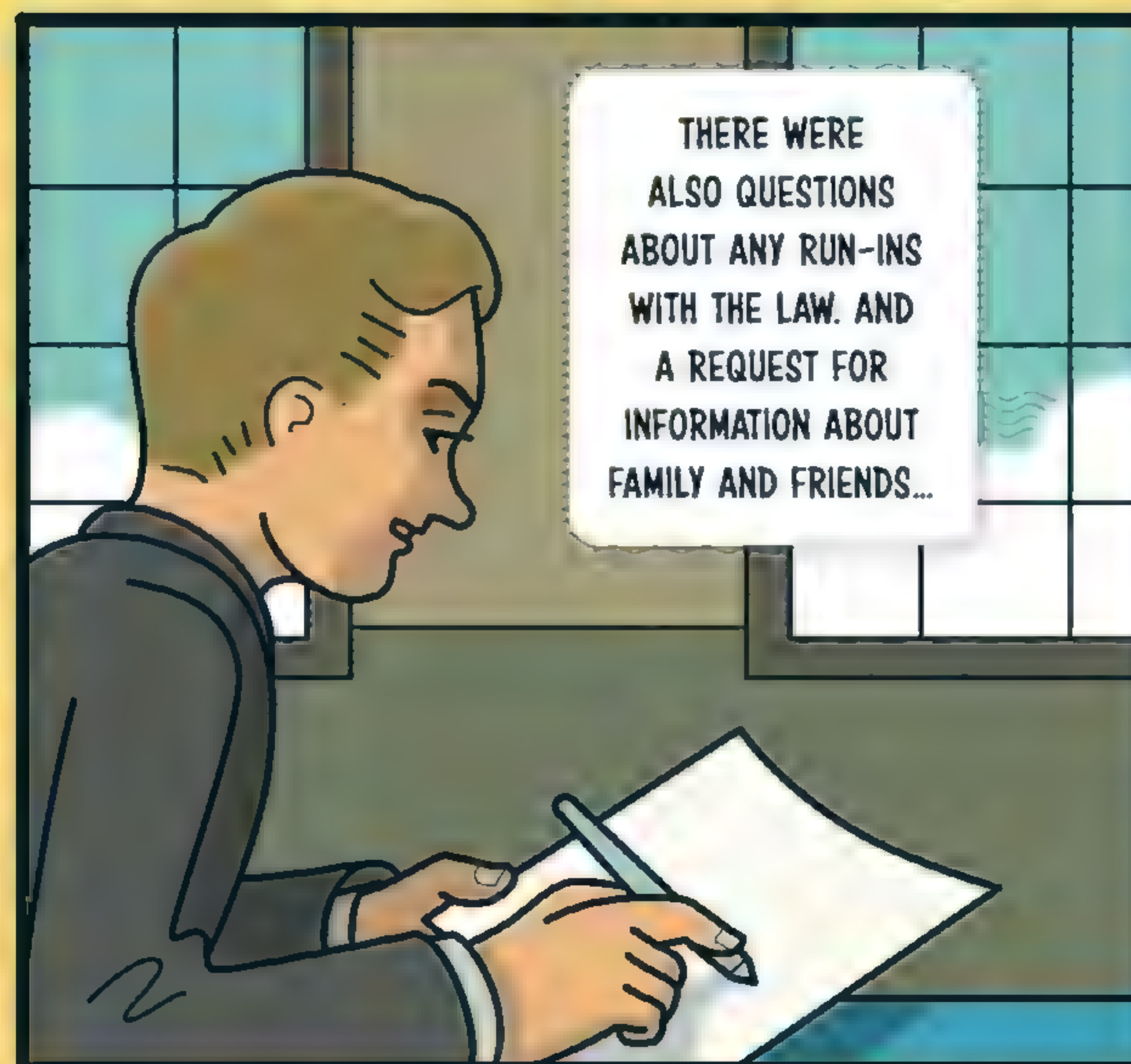
JIM INTRODUCED HIMSELF AND EXPLAINED  
THAT A FRIEND HAD USED THE SERVICE  
AND FOUND IT VERY HELPFUL. WHEN HE  
PUT THE SILVER COIN ON THE COUNTER,  
THE WOMAN'S SMILE BROADENED.



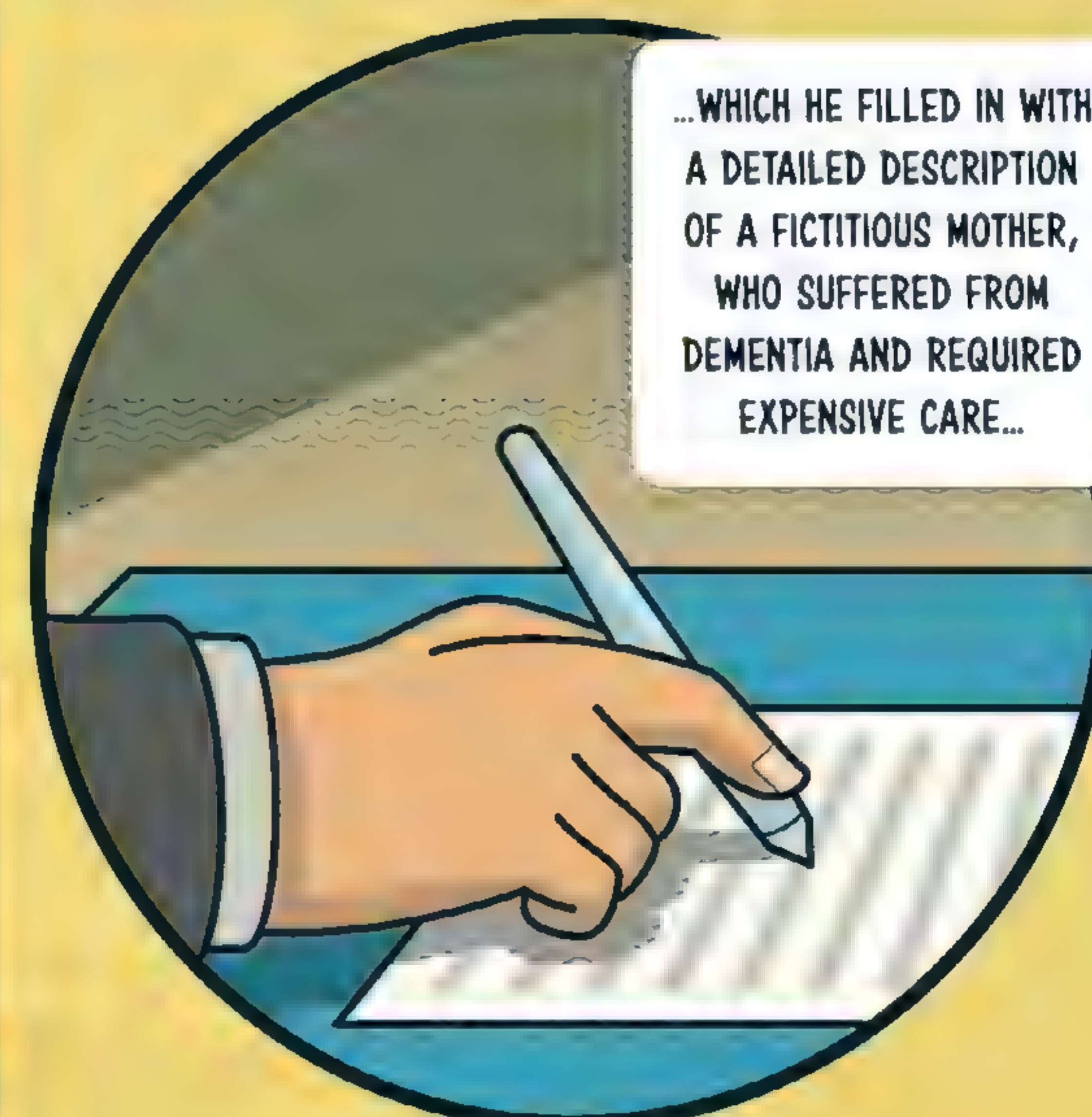
LET'S GET YOU STARTED  
ON OUR REGISTRATION,  
MR. JARVIS. I'LL NEED  
YOU TO FILL OUT  
THESE FORMS.



THE FORMS WANTED  
ALL HIS FINANCIAL  
INFORMATION AS WELL  
AS HIS EDUCATION  
BACKGROUND.

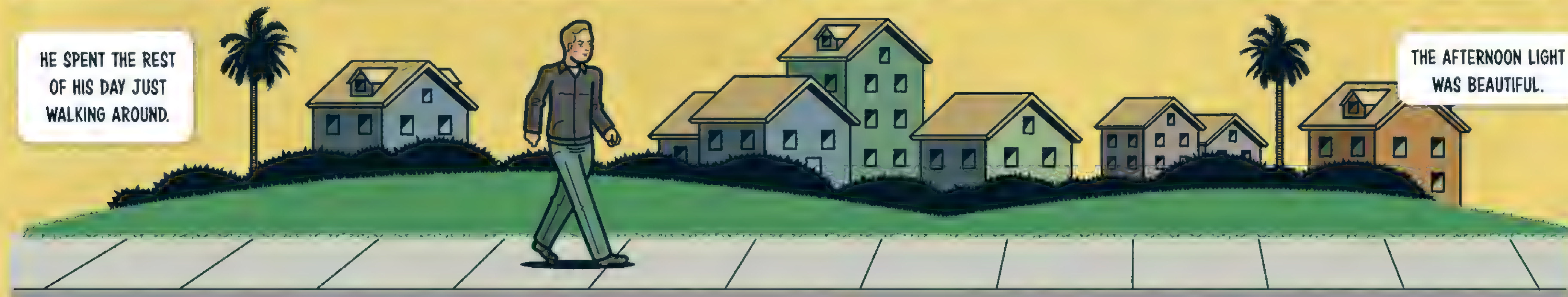


THERE WERE  
ALSO QUESTIONS  
ABOUT ANY RUN-INS  
WITH THE LAW. AND  
A REQUEST FOR  
INFORMATION ABOUT  
FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

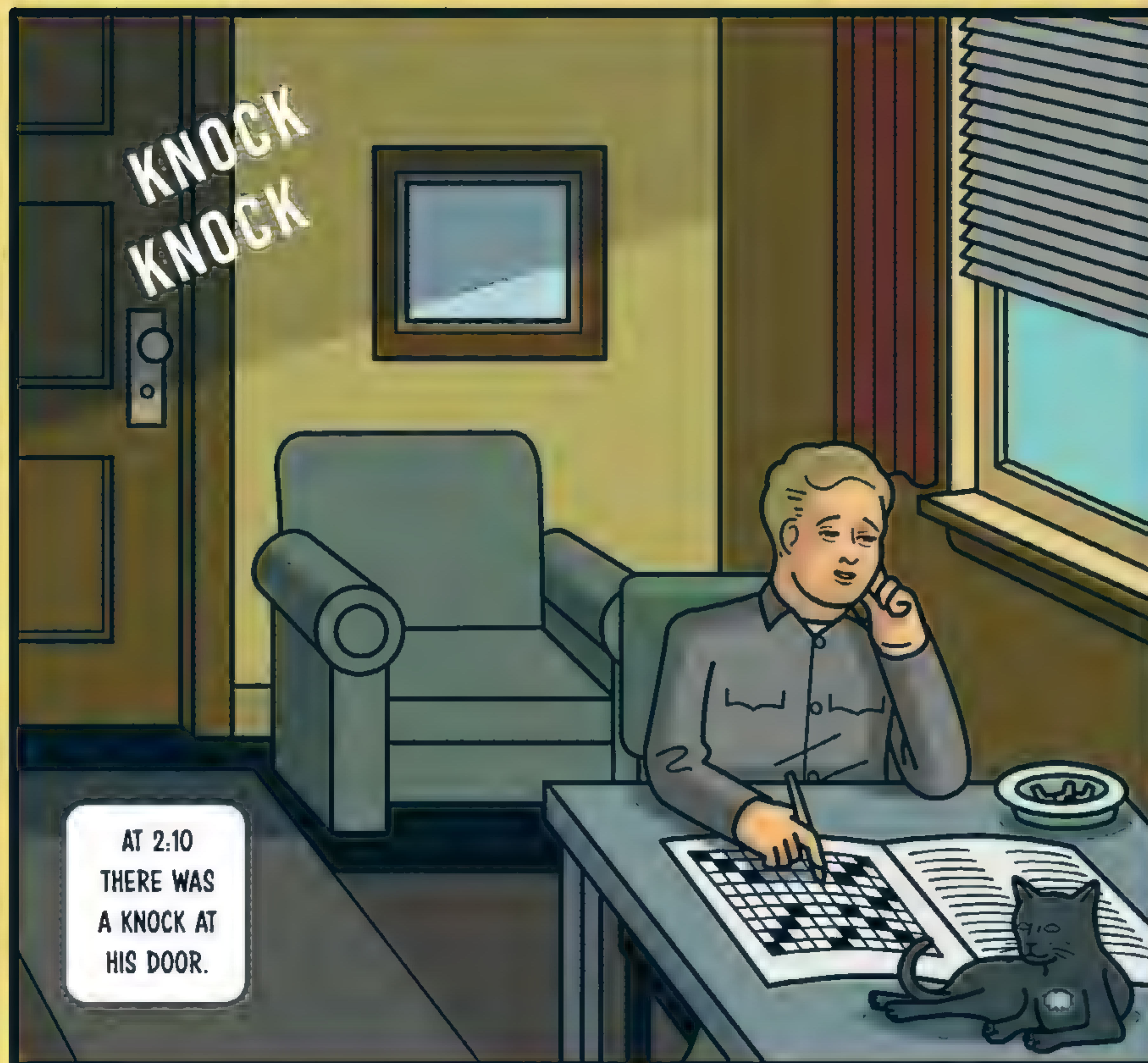


...WHICH HE FILLED IN WITH  
A DETAILED DESCRIPTION  
OF A FICTITIOUS MOTHER,  
WHO SUFFERED FROM  
DEMENTIA AND REQUIRED  
EXPENSIVE CARE...

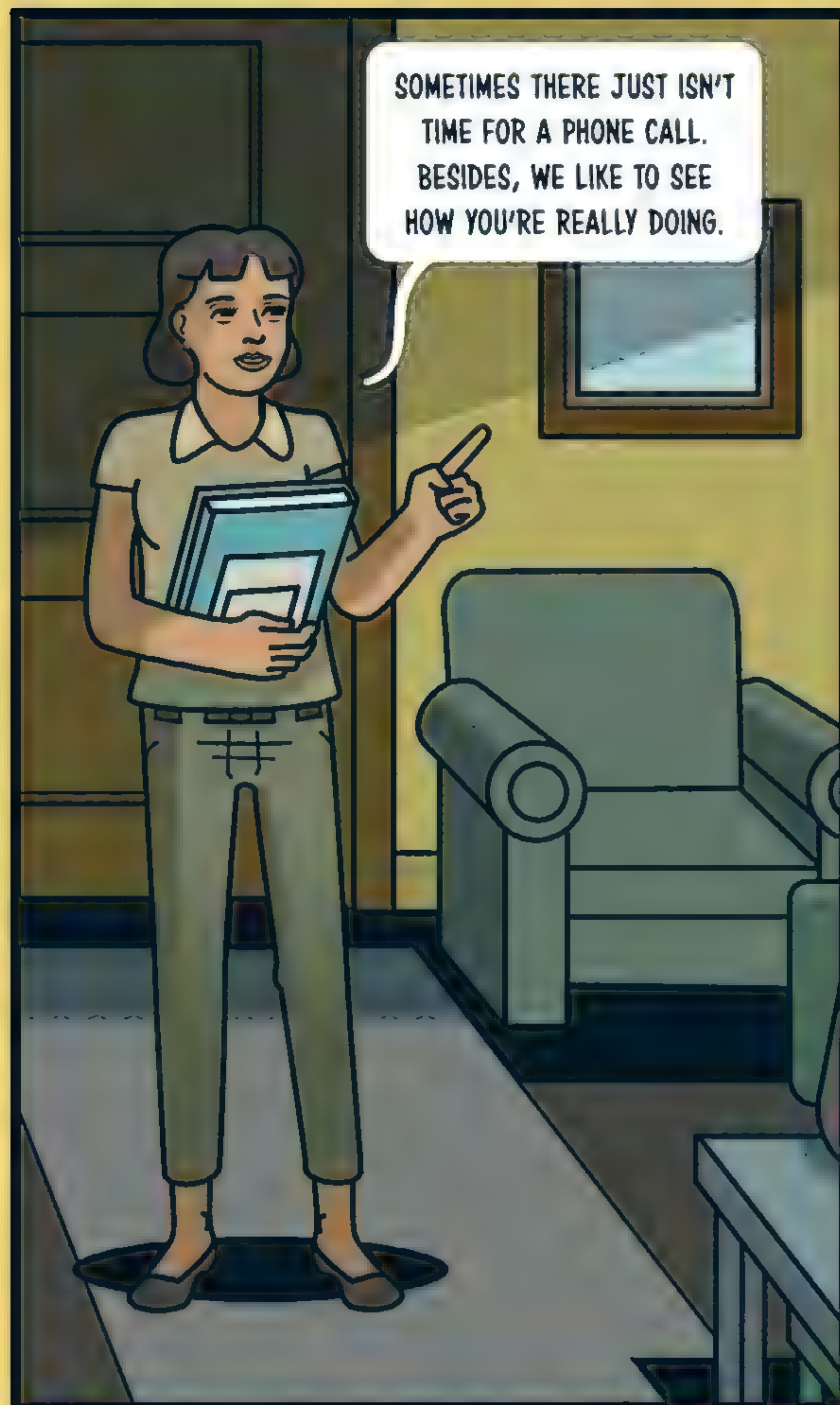












SOMETIMES THERE JUST ISN'T  
TIME FOR A PHONE CALL.  
BESIDES, WE LIKE TO SEE  
HOW YOU'RE REALLY DOING.



KIMBERLY ENGAGED HIM IN  
SMALL TALK AS SHE WALKED  
AROUND THE APARTMENT.  
SHE STOPPED OCCASIONALLY  
TO LOOK IN THE CLOSETS  
AND THE DRAWERS.



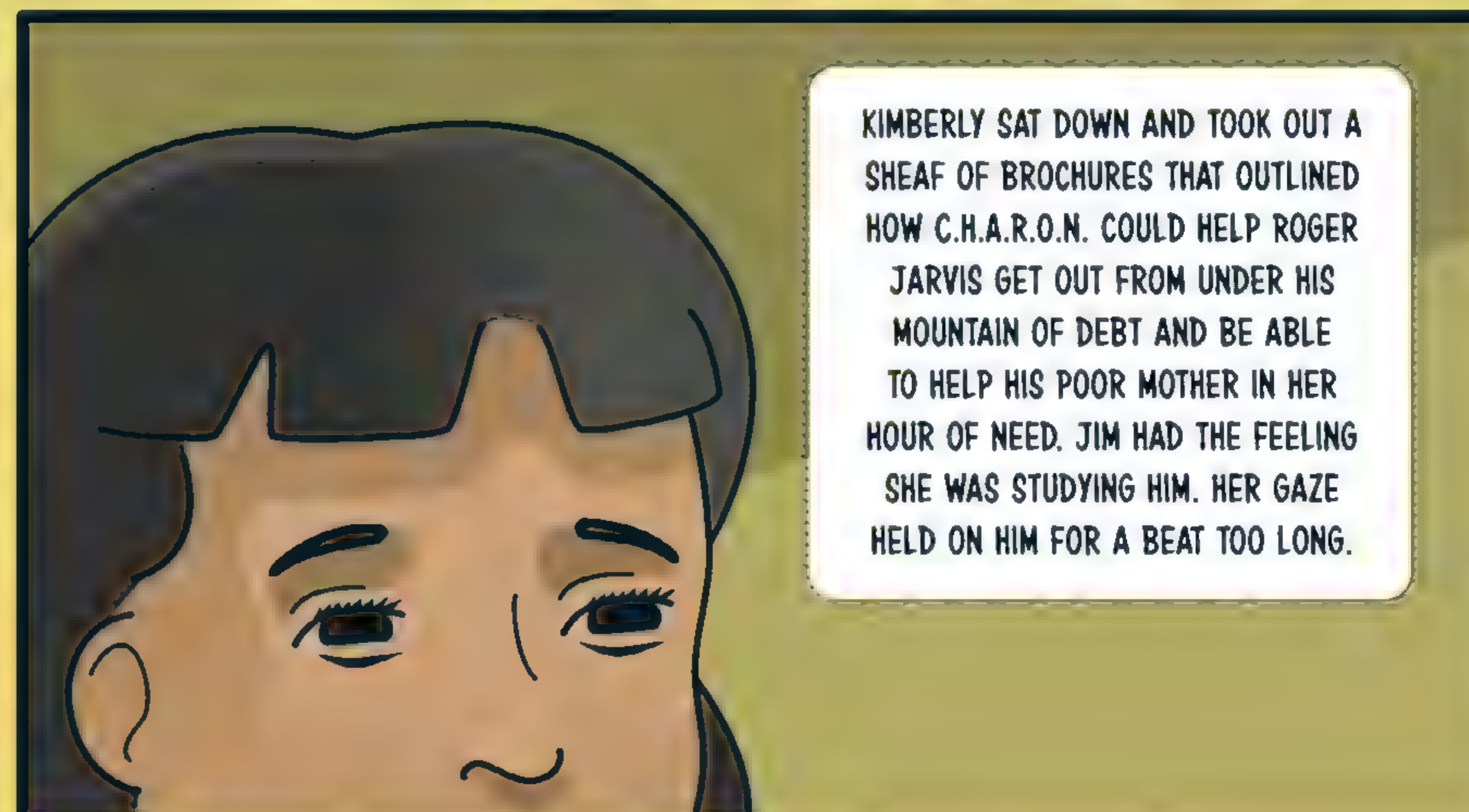
WOULD YOU SAY  
YOUR FINANCIAL  
DISTRESS IS  
DESTROYING  
YOUR LIFE?

SHE OPENED THE  
REFRIGERATOR,  
GRIMACED,  
AND QUICKLY  
CLOSED IT.



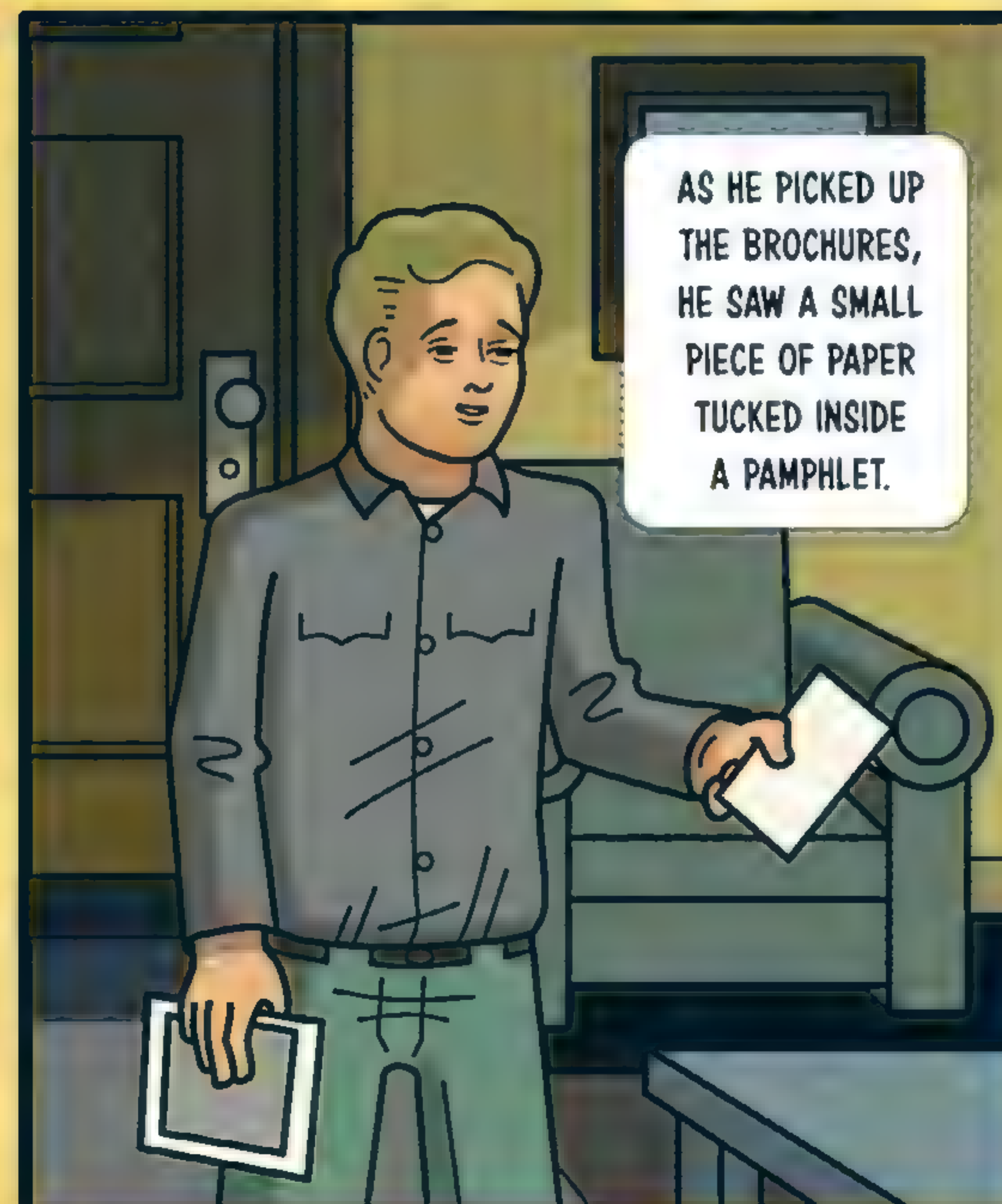
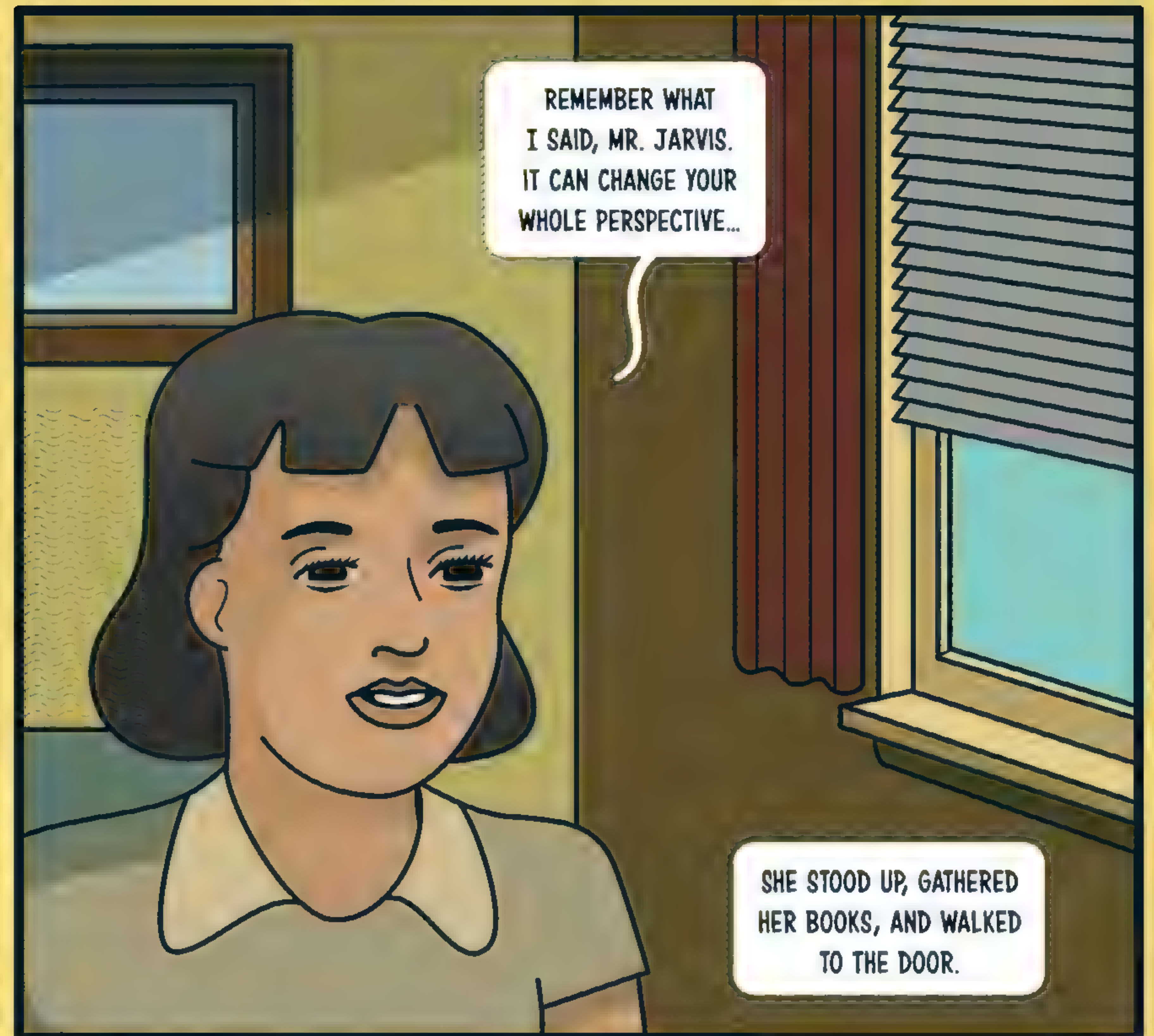
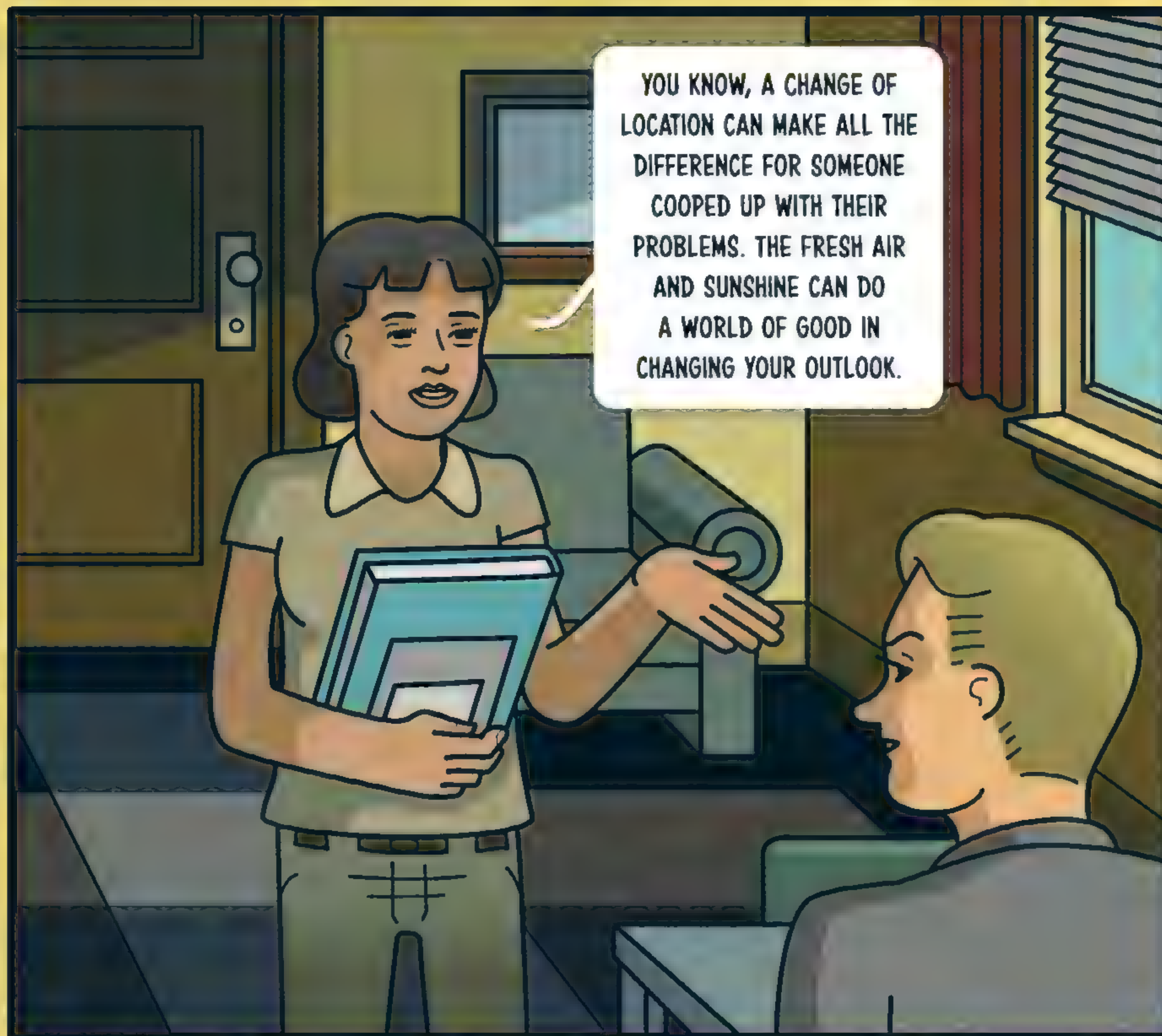
IN A BETTER WORLD, WOULDN'T  
YOU LIKE TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE  
FOR YOUR AILING MOTHER?

YEAH, THAT  
BOTHERS ME  
A LOT...



KIMBERLY SAT DOWN AND TOOK OUT A  
SHEAF OF BROCHURES THAT OUTLINED  
HOW C.H.A.R.O.N. COULD HELP ROGER  
JARVIS GET OUT FROM UNDER HIS  
MOUNTAIN OF DEBT AND BE ABLE  
TO HELP HIS POOR MOTHER IN HER  
HOUR OF NEED. JIM HAD THE FEELING  
SHE WAS STUDYING HIM. HER GAZE  
HELD ON HIM FOR A BEAT TOO LONG.









JIM MEANDERED THROUGH THE PATHS AT THE TAR PITS.



LOTS OF PEOPLE LINGERED ABOUT IN THE EARLY-EVENING LIGHT.



HE HEARD SOMEONE WALK UP FROM BEHIND. IT WAS KIMBERLY. AS SHE PASSED, SHE WHISPERED TO HIM...

FOLLOW ME. TURN RIGHT WHEN YOU REACH THE FORK.

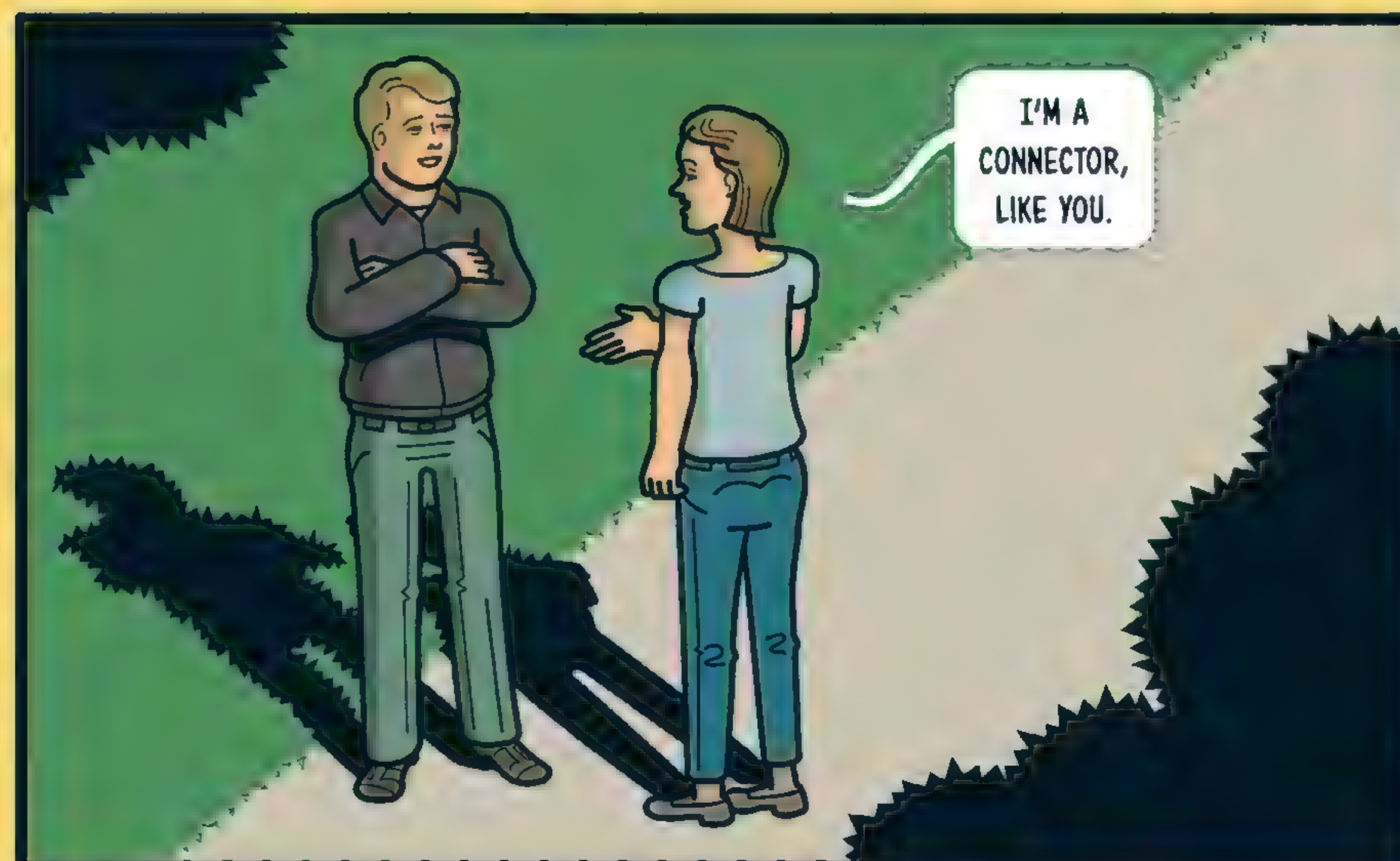
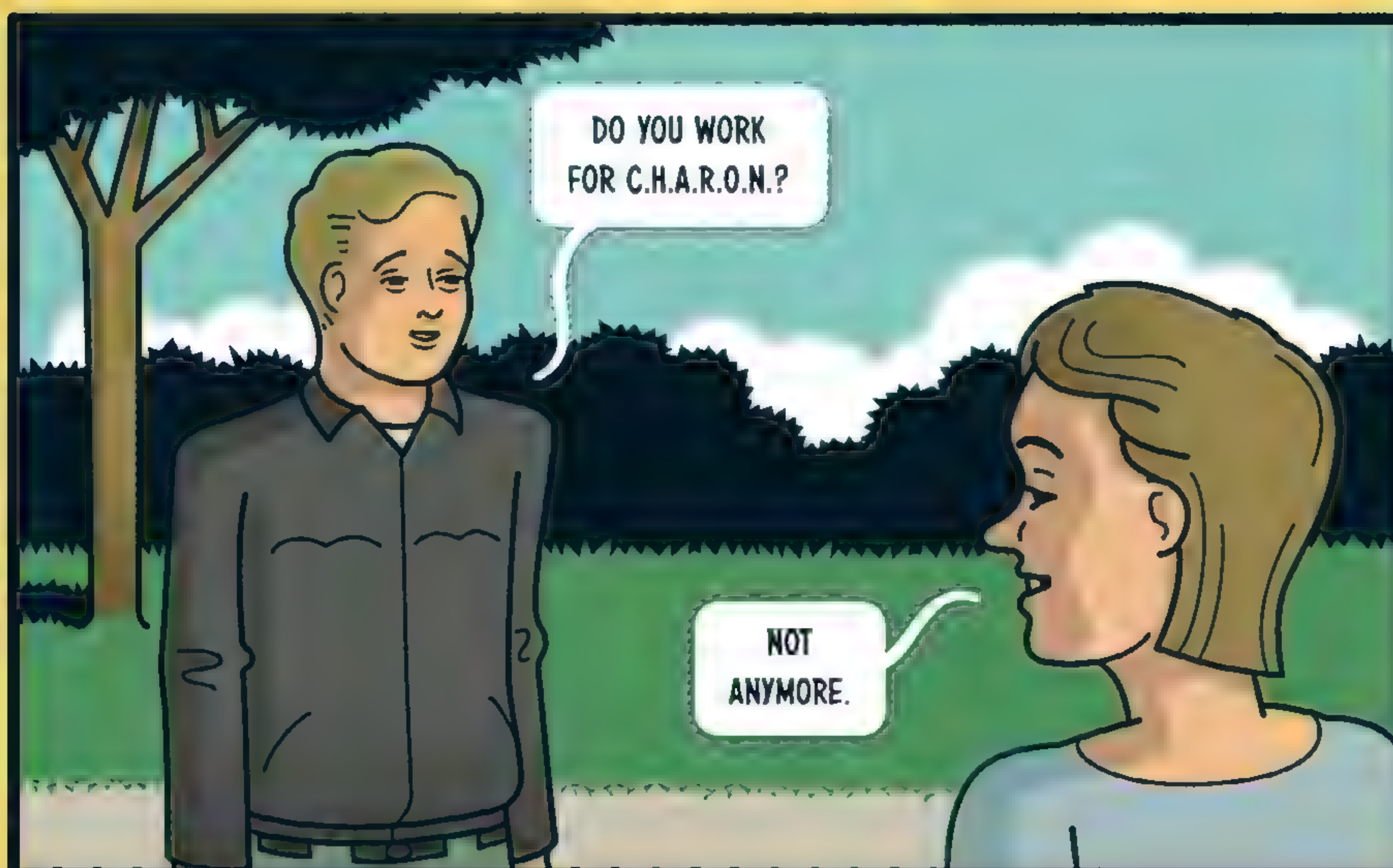


KIMBERLY CONTINUED ON AND DID NOT LOOK BACK.

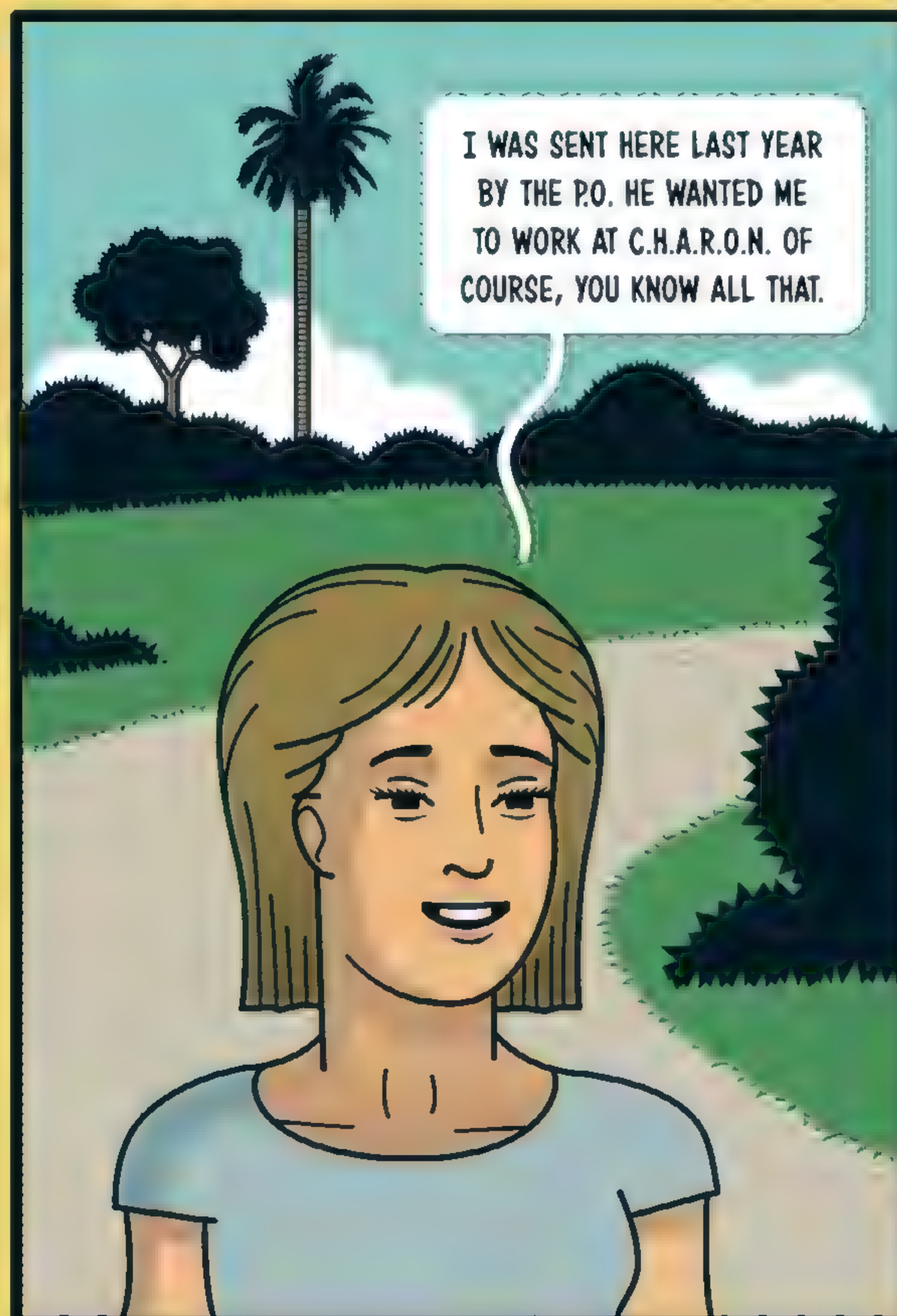




SHE LOOKED AT HIM AS HE APPROACHED.



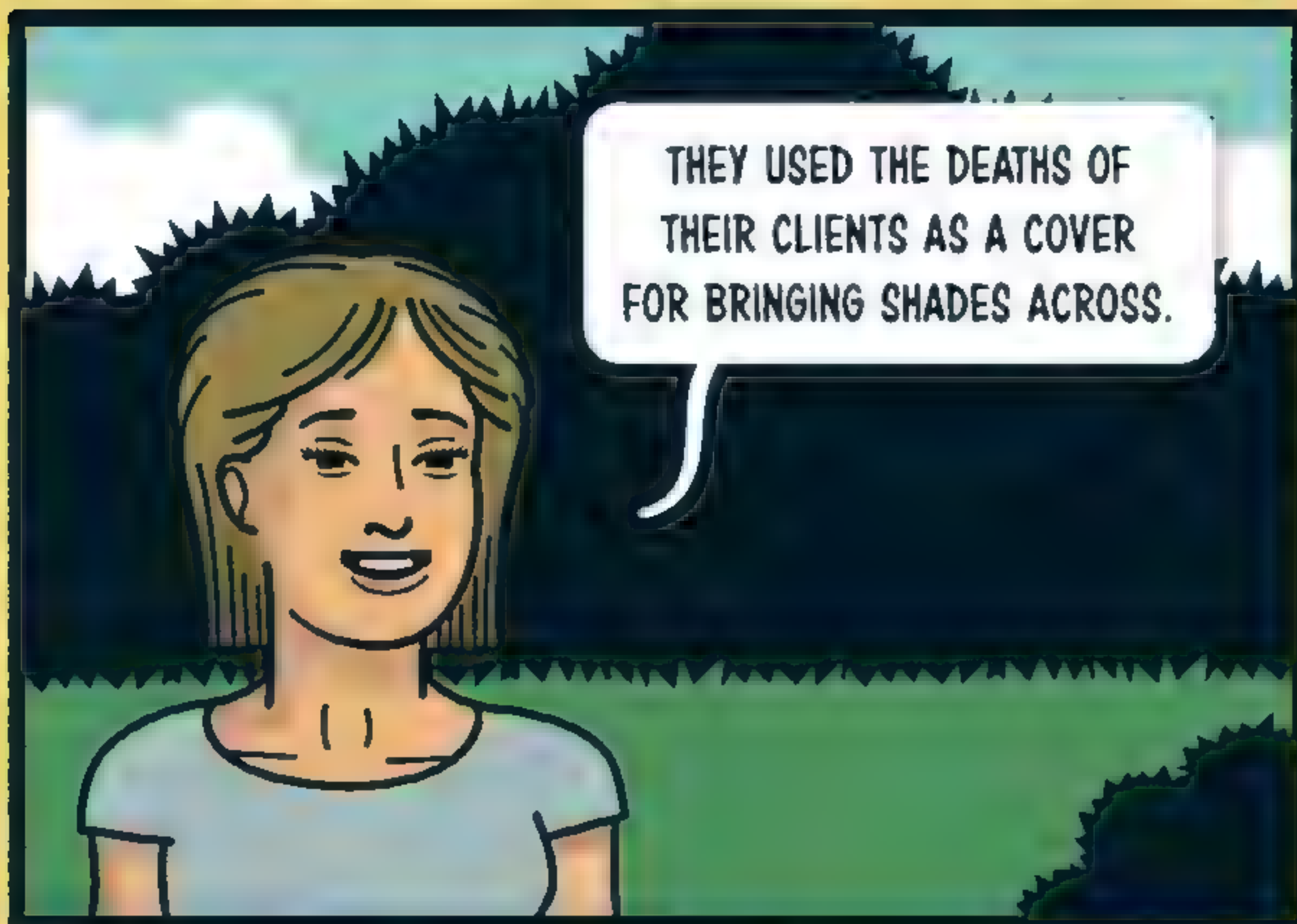




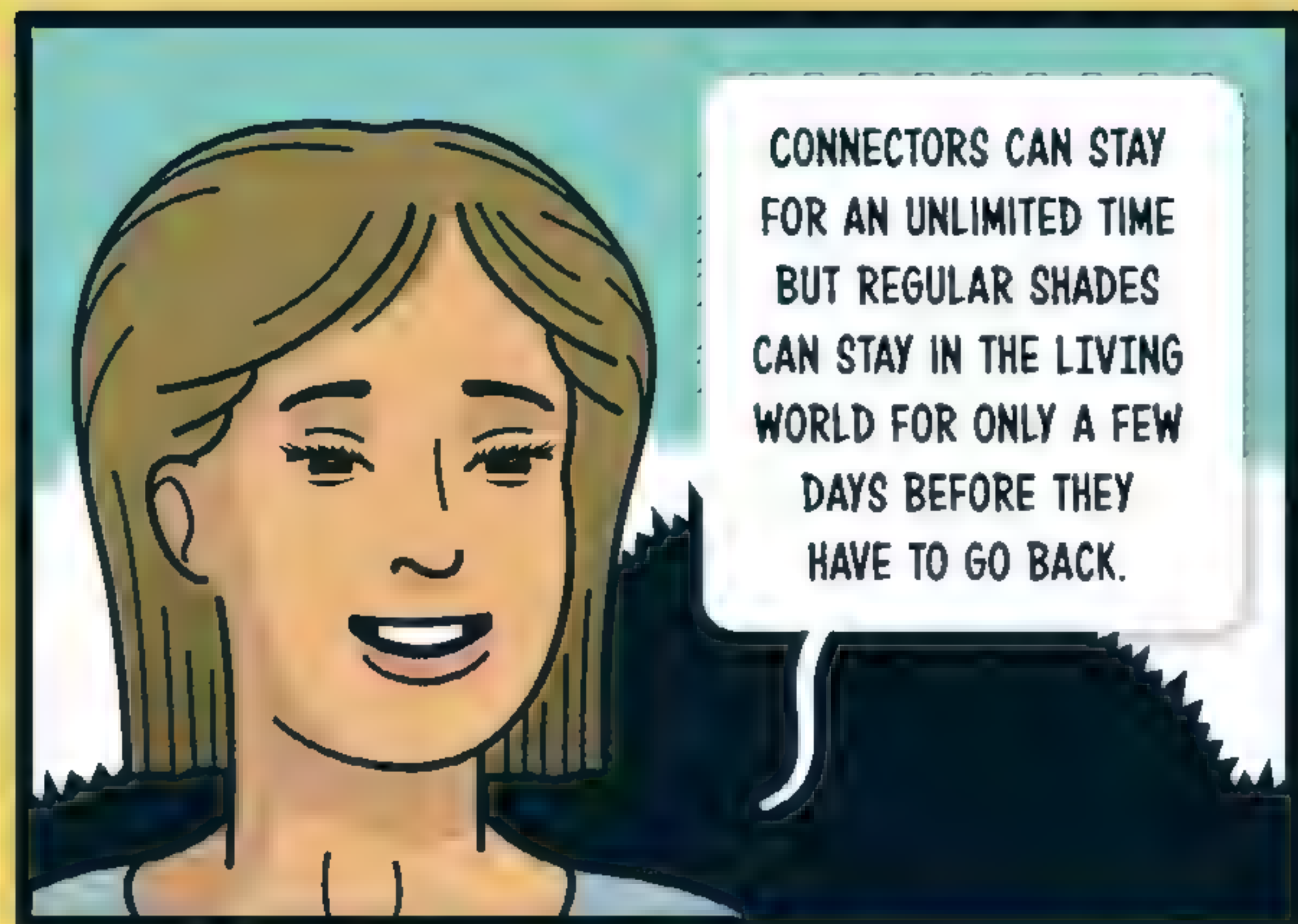




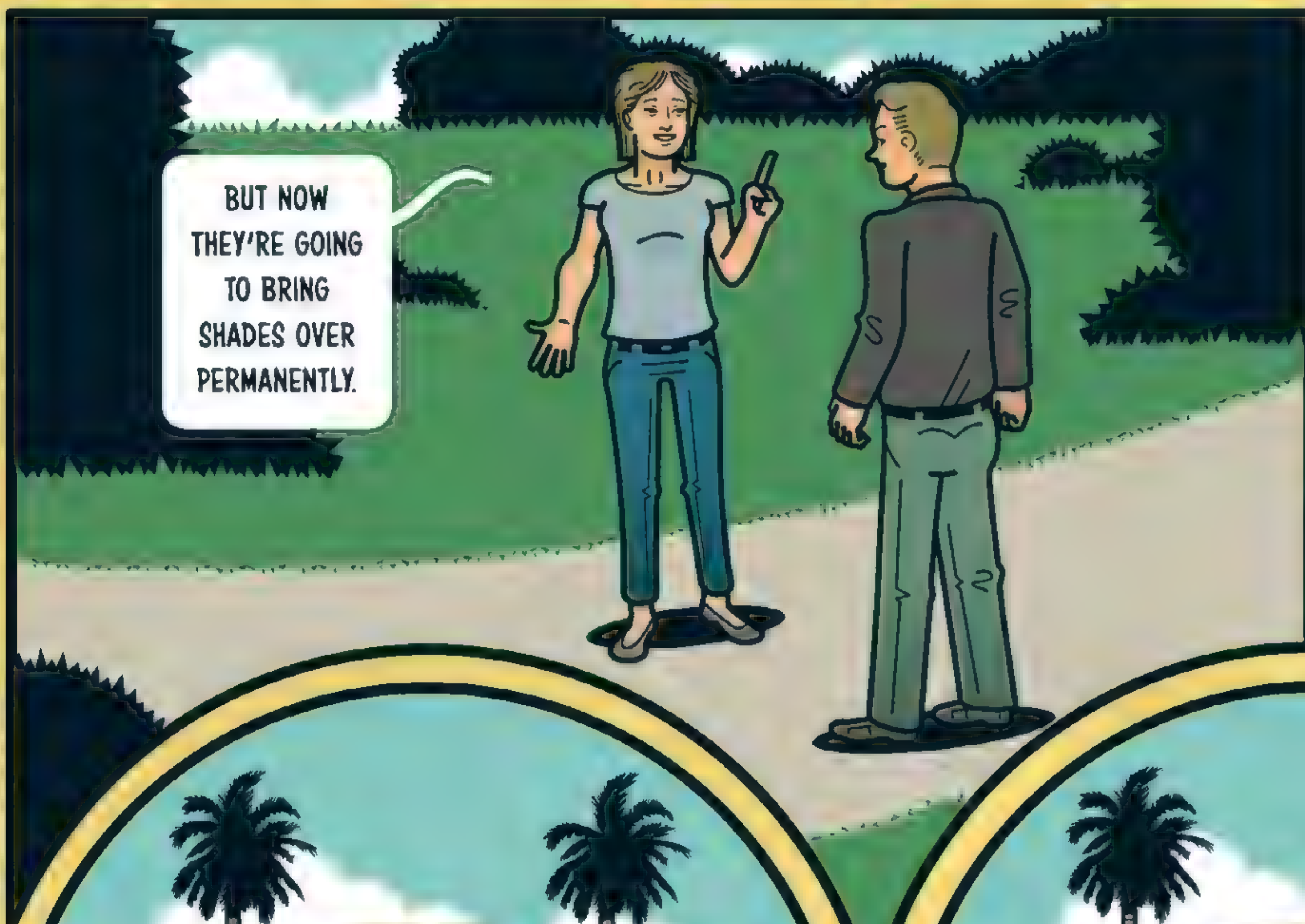
YEAH, THAT'S  
WHAT IT WAS...  
FOR A WHILE...



THEY USED THE DEATHS OF  
THEIR CLIENTS AS A COVER  
FOR BRINGING SHADES ACROSS.



CONNECTORS CAN STAY  
FOR AN UNLIMITED TIME  
BUT REGULAR SHADES  
CAN STAY IN THE LIVING  
WORLD FOR ONLY A FEW  
DAYS BEFORE THEY  
HAVE TO GO BACK.



BUT NOW  
THEY'RE GOING  
TO BRING  
SHADES OVER  
PERMANENTLY.



A FEW MONTHS AGO THE P.O. ASKED ME  
TO COME BACK. I DON'T TRUST HIM AND  
WANT TO STAY OUT OF A JAR, SO I WENT  
UNDERGROUND, IN THE LIVING WORLD.



KIMBERLY  
AND I ARE  
TOGETHER.



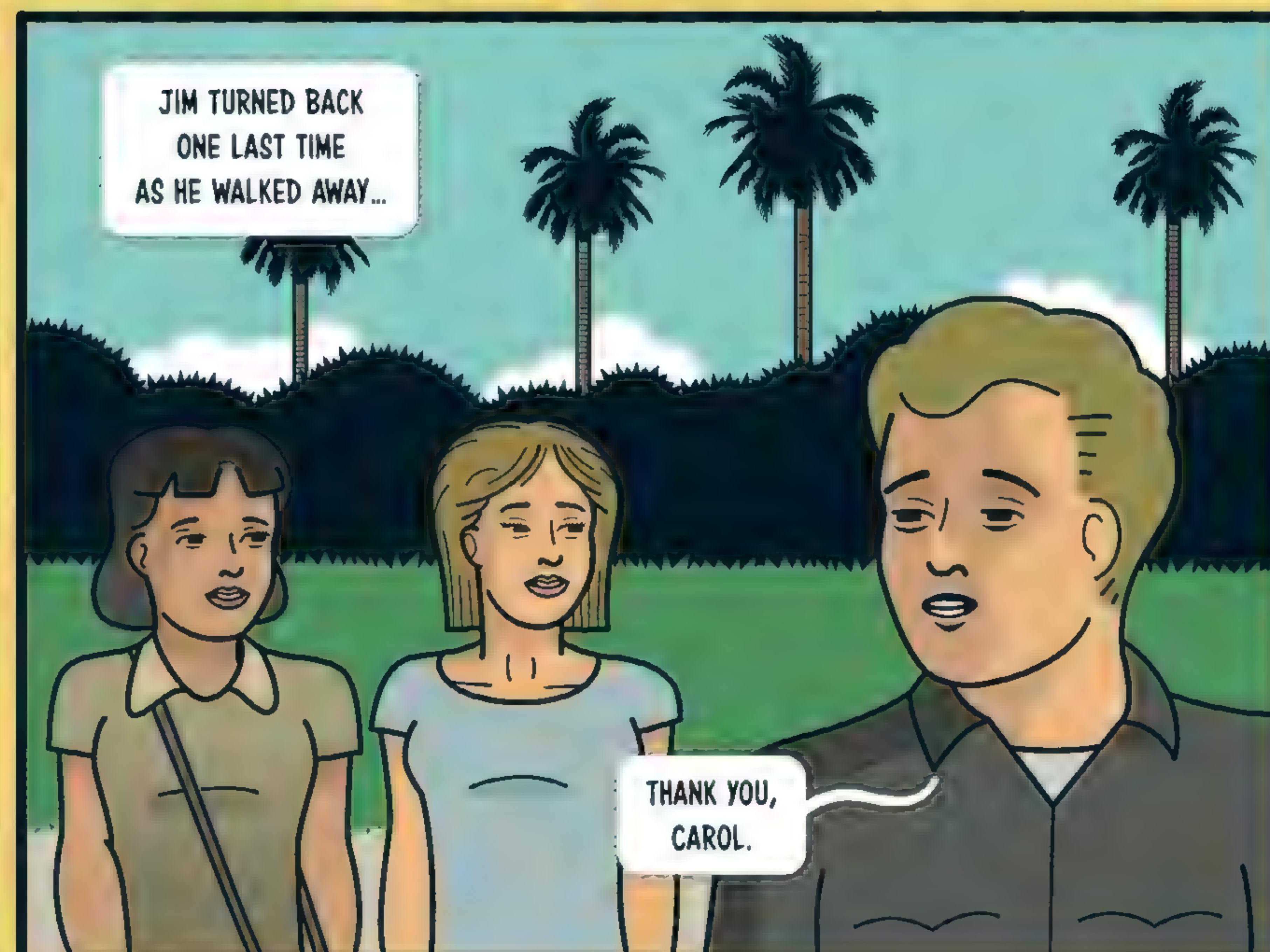
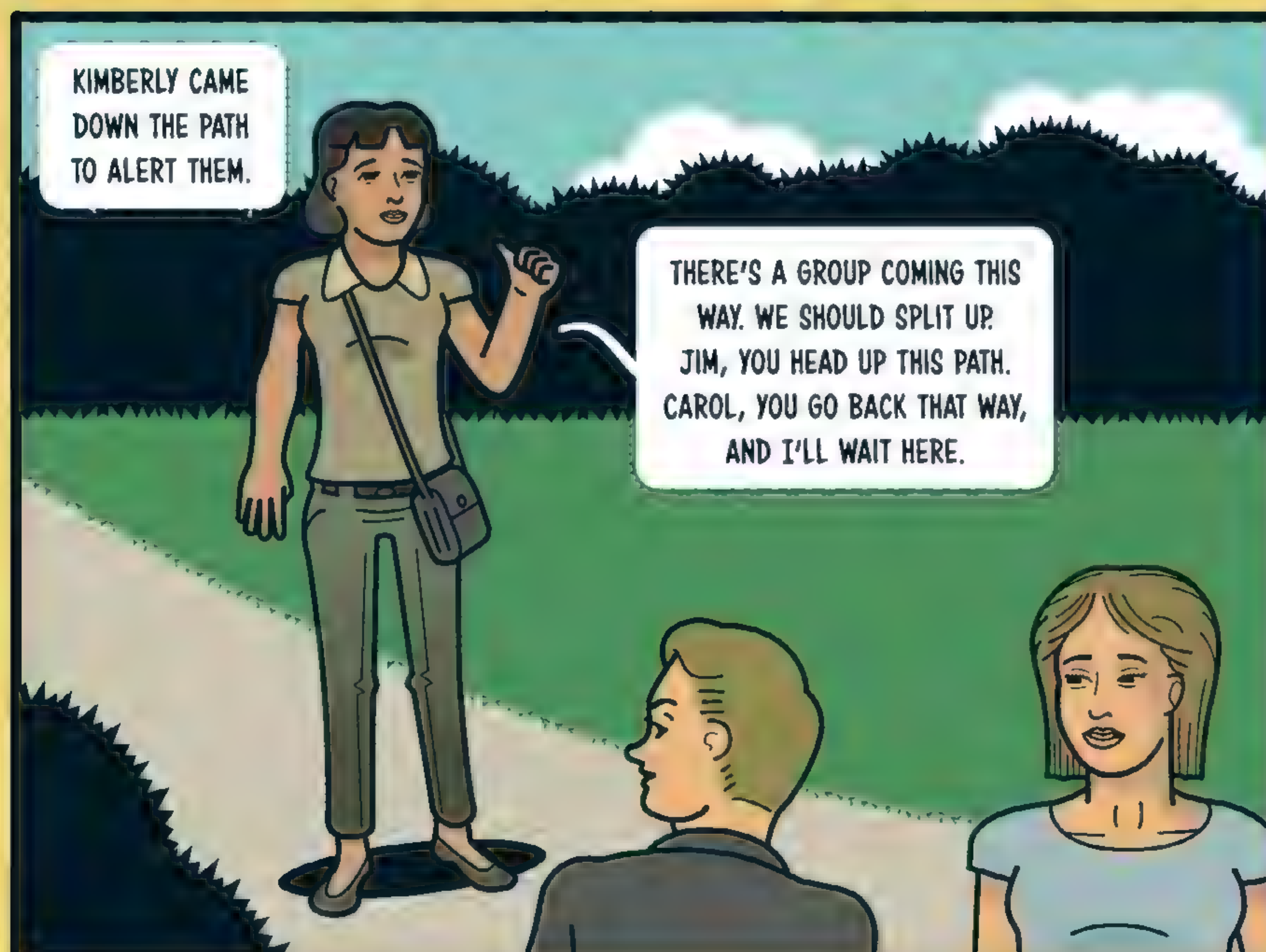
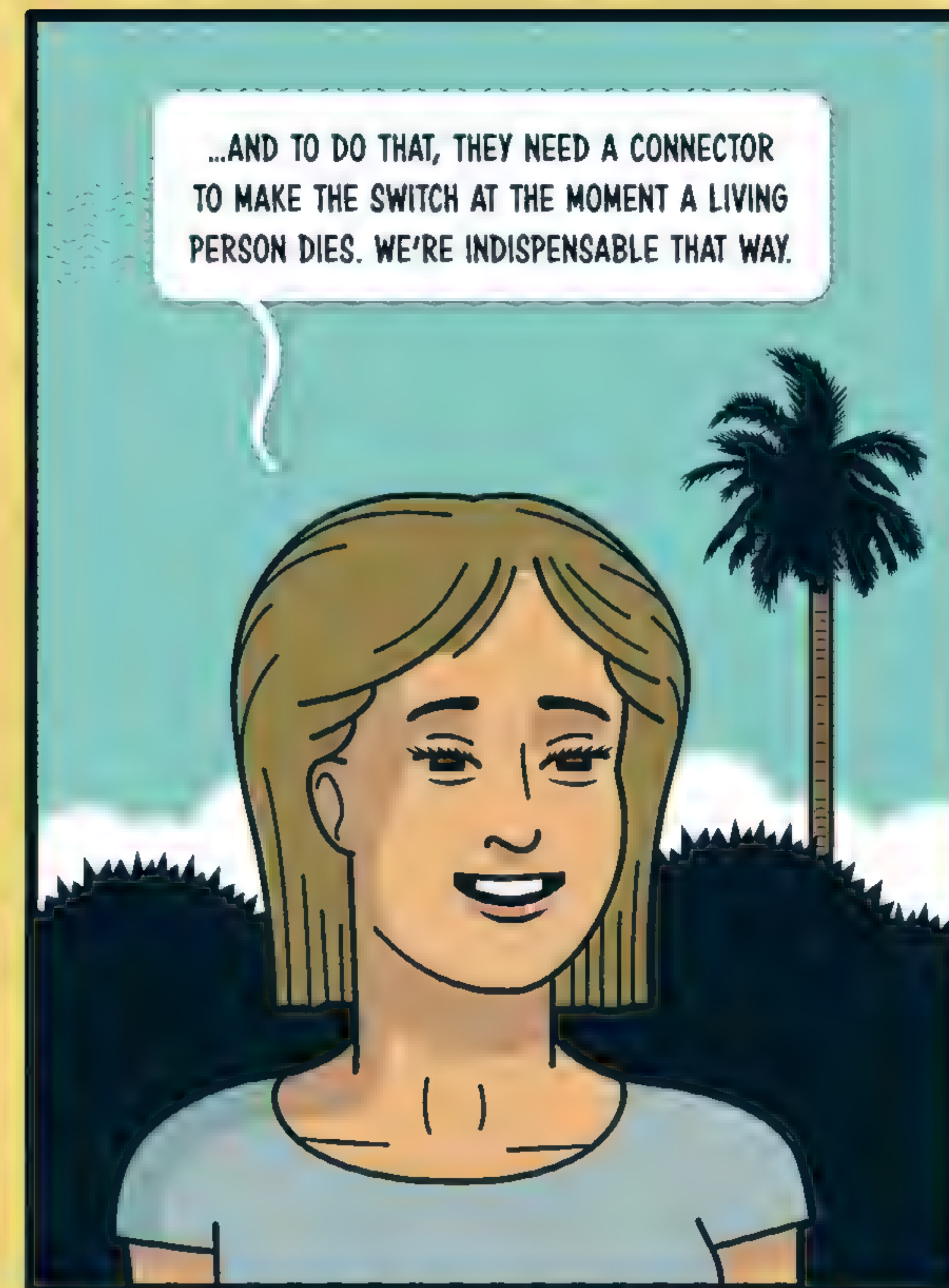
IT'S SAFER  
FOR ME IF  
SHE STAYS ON  
AT C.H.A.R.O.N.,  
MY EYES AND  
EARS ON THE  
INSIDE.



THE PEOPLE WHO  
WORK THERE HAVE  
NO IDEA WHAT'S  
REALLY GOING ON.  
THEY TRULY  
BELIEVE IT'S  
A COMMUNITY  
OUTREACH  
PROGRAM.

SHE LAUGHED  
AT THIS  
LAST PART.





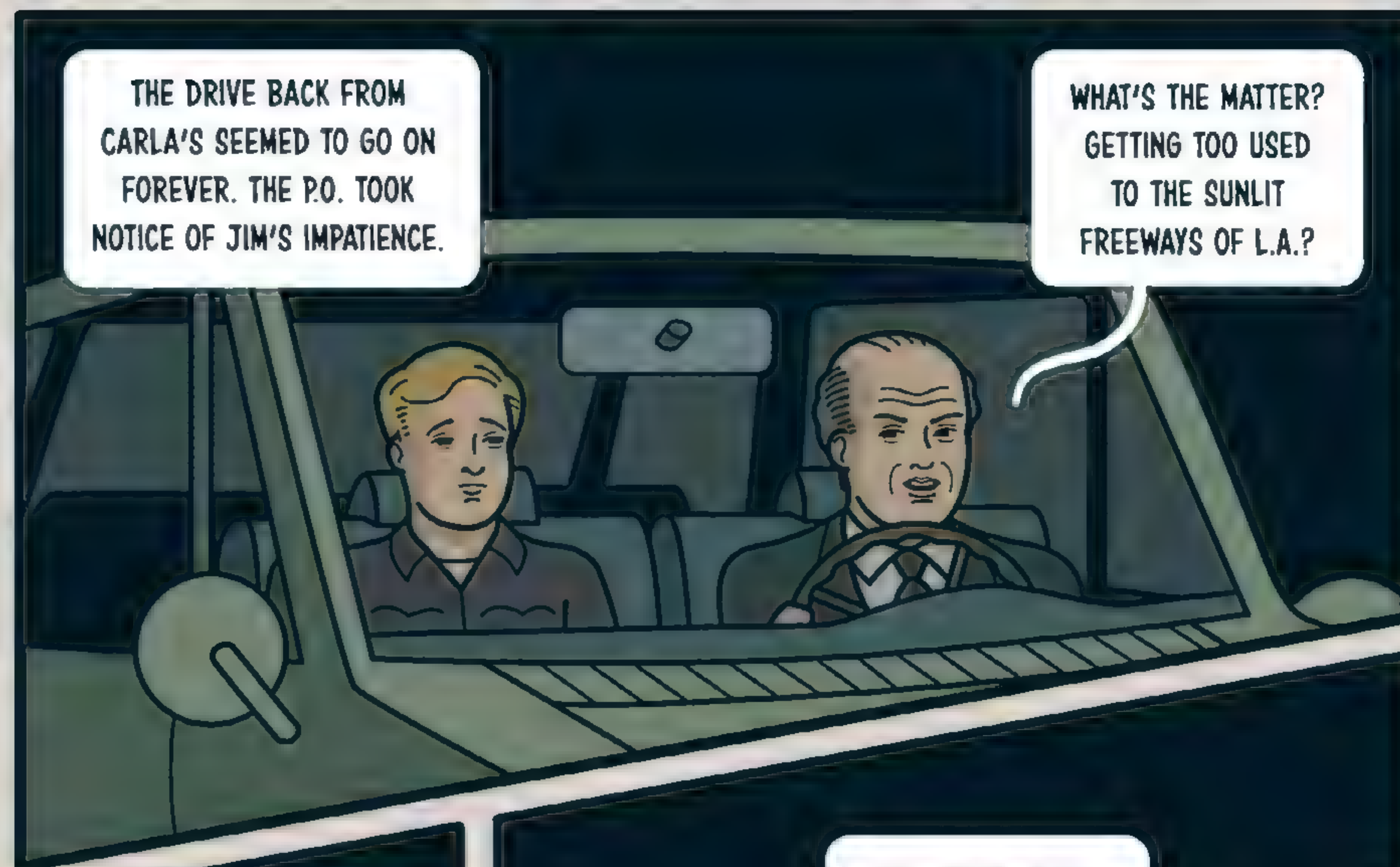






# CHAPTER

# 15



THE DRIVE BACK FROM CARLA'S SEEMED TO GO ON FOREVER. THE P.O. TOOK NOTICE OF JIM'S IMPATIENCE.

WHAT'S THE MATTER? GETTING TOO USED TO THE SUNLIT FREEWAYS OF L.A.?



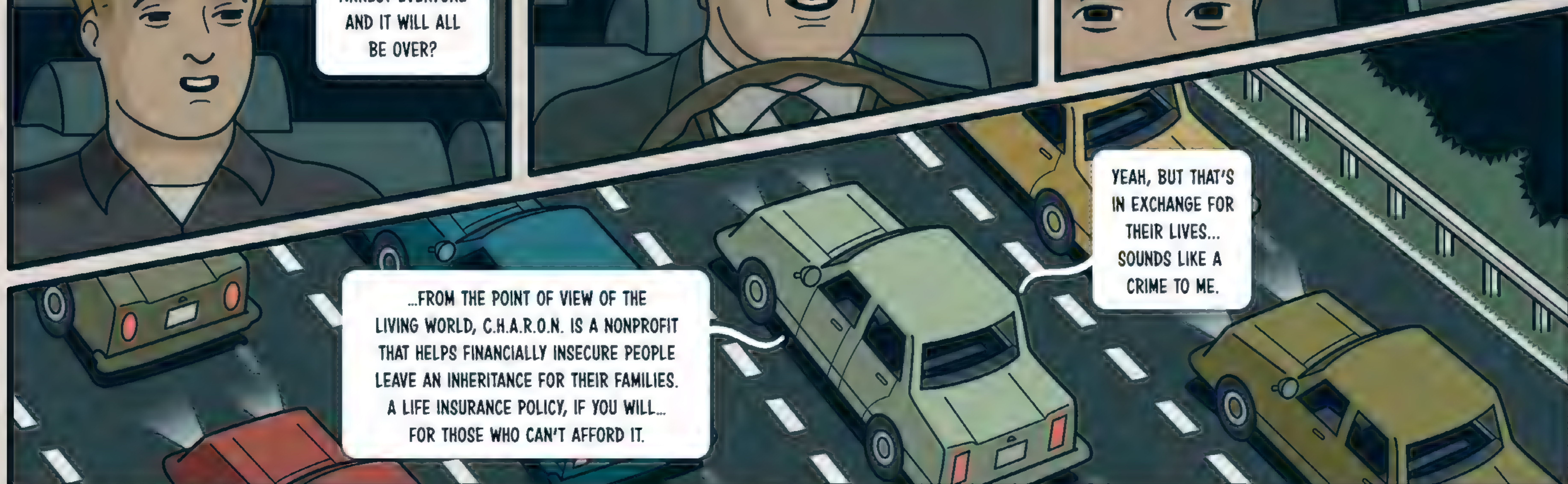
EVERY TIME I GO UNDER THE RIVER I WANT IT TO BE THE LAST TIME. WON'T THE L.A.P.D. EVENTUALLY JUST ARREST EVERYONE AND IT WILL ALL BE OVER?



THE L.A.P.D.? THEY CAN'T ARREST PEOPLE FOR SHADE SMUGGLING... THERE'S NO LAW AGAINST IT...



...THE LIVING WORLD DOESN'T RECOGNIZE THAT SHADES EXIST...



...FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE LIVING WORLD, C.H.A.R.O.N. IS A NONPROFIT THAT HELPS FINANCIALLY INSECURE PEOPLE LEAVE AN INHERITANCE FOR THEIR FAMILIES. A LIFE INSURANCE POLICY, IF YOU WILL... FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T AFFORD IT.

YEAH, BUT THAT'S IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR LIVES... SOUNDS LIKE A CRIME TO ME.



NO, YOU'RE WRONG. WHEN OUR C.H.A.R.O.N. CLIENTS PASS ON, IT'S STRICTLY FROM NATURAL CAUSES.

MOST OF THEM ARE IN POOR HEALTH, WHICH IS WHY THEY SOUGHT OUT C.H.A.R.O.N.'S HELP IN THE FIRST PLACE.

WHEN THEIR SHADE DEPARTS, WE USE THAT SPACE TO GIVE ANOTHER SHADE THE CHANCE TO BE IN THE LIVING WORLD FOR A FEW DAYS. IT'S ALL DONE SO THAT WE MAINTAIN THE NECESSARY BALANCE BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

SO, WHY GET ME INVOLVED?

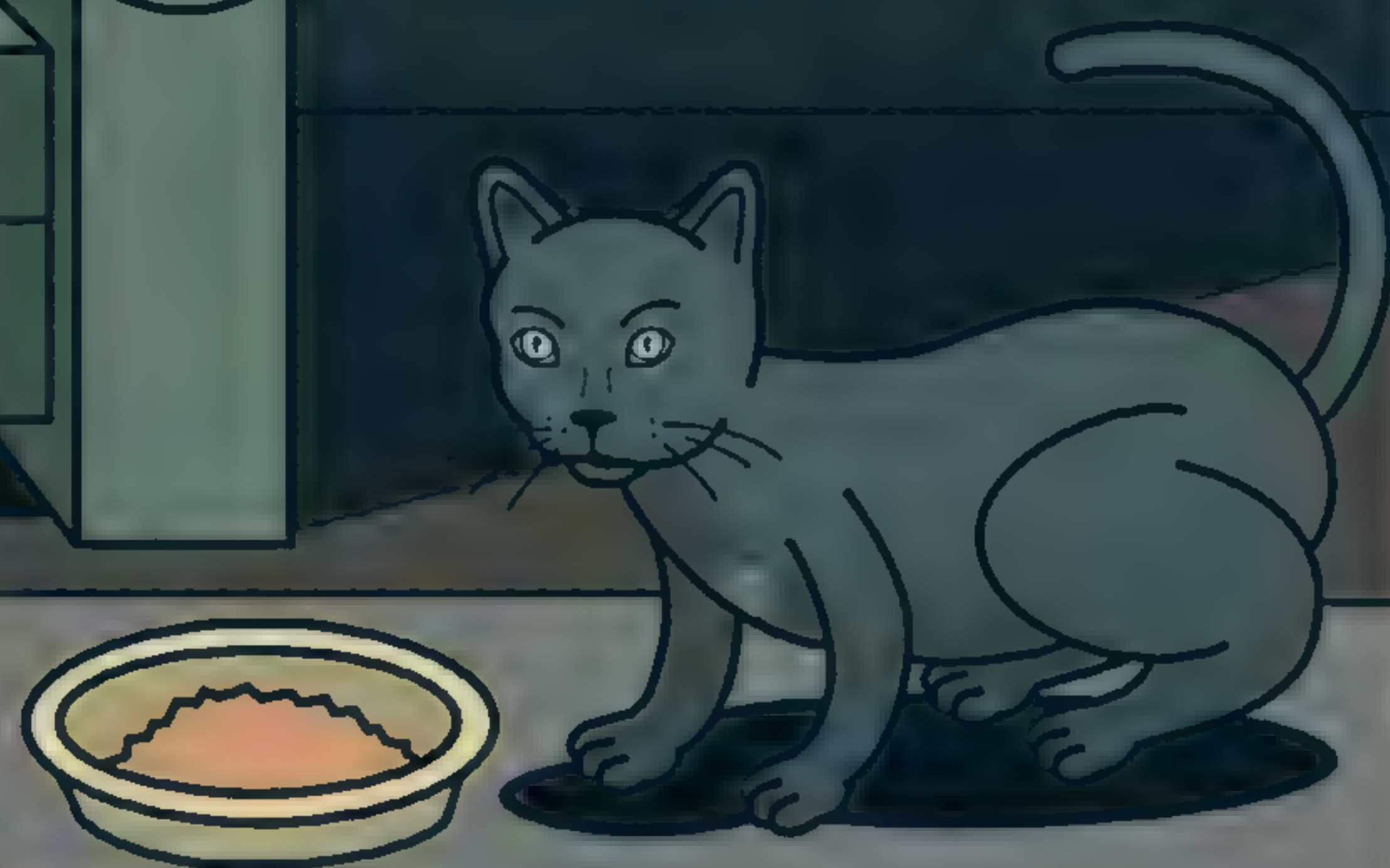
I NEED YOU TO BE THE NEW CONNECTOR.

WITH JARVIS' IDENTITY, IT WILL BE EASY FOR YOU... YOU'LL GET TO ENJOY THE LIVING WORLD AGAIN... AND I'LL GET A CONNECTOR THAT'S MORE "PROFESSIONAL" THAN THE LAST TWO.

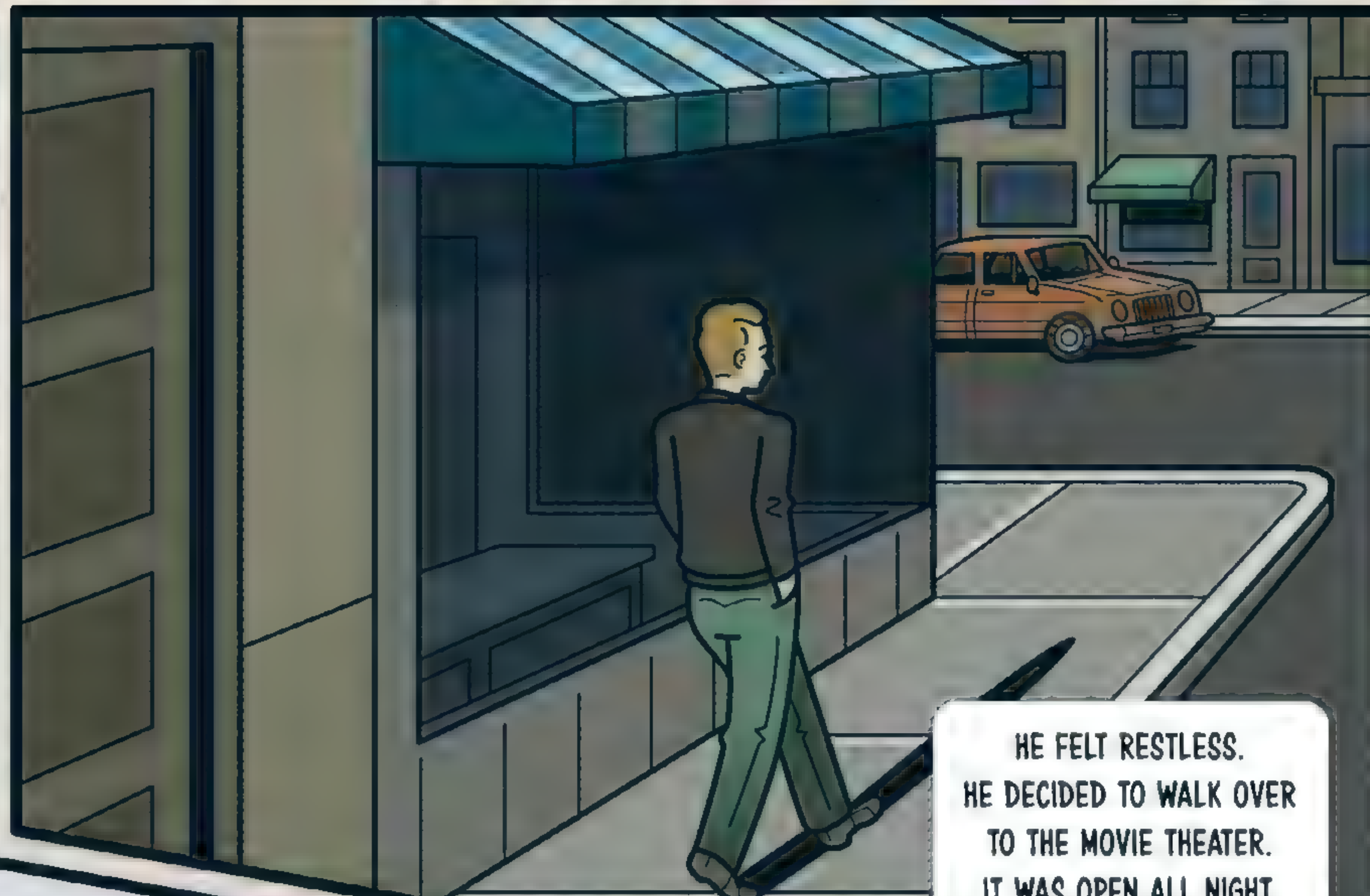
AND JIM...THE NEXT SÉANCE IS IN TWO DAYS. I'LL PICK YOU UP TUESDAY, AT 5 P.M.



ONCE UPSTAIRS, HE THOUGHT  
ABOUT THE CAT BACK AT  
JARVIS' APARTMENT.  
HE'D LEFT ENOUGH FOOD OUT  
TO LAST HER A FEW DAYS.  
BUT STILL, THE CAT  
STAYED ON HIS MIND.



HE FELT RESTLESS.  
HE DECIDED TO WALK OVER  
TO THE MOVIE THEATER.  
IT WAS OPEN ALL NIGHT.



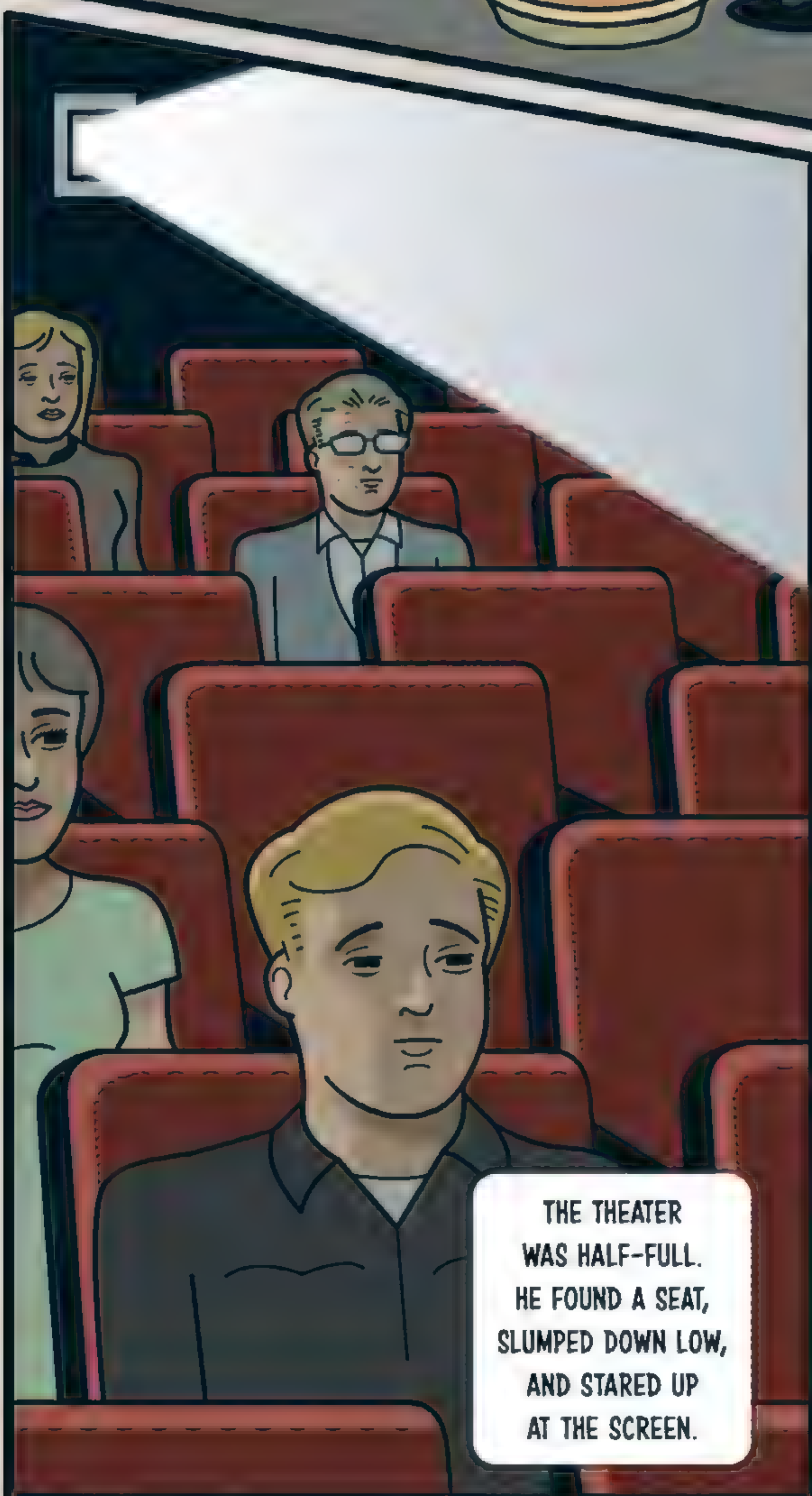
A MELODRAMA.  
THE SCENE CUT BETWEEN  
TWO FACES.  
A MAN AND A WOMAN.  
THE WOMAN'S EYES WERE  
BRIMMED WITH TEARS.



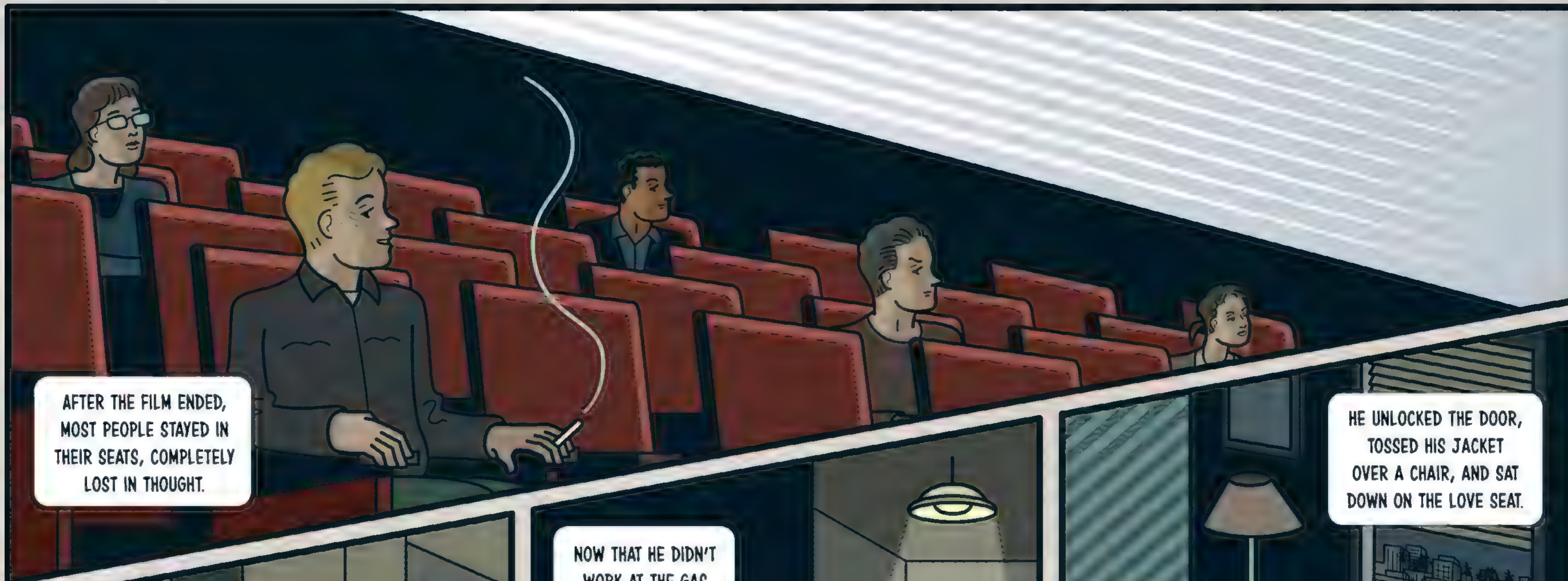
JIM TOOK OUT  
THE SILVER COIN  
LIEUTENANT BURGESS  
HAD GIVEN HIM. HE KNEW  
THE P.O. HAD HIM TRAPPED.  
MAYBE CAROL HAD THE  
RIGHT IDEA.  
GO UNDERGROUND  
IN THE LIVING WORLD.



THE THEATER  
WAS HALF-FULL.  
HE FOUND A SEAT,  
SLUMPED DOWN LOW,  
AND STARED UP  
AT THE SCREEN.







AFTER THE FILM ENDED,  
MOST PEOPLE STAYED IN  
THEIR SEATS, COMPLETELY  
LOST IN THOUGHT.



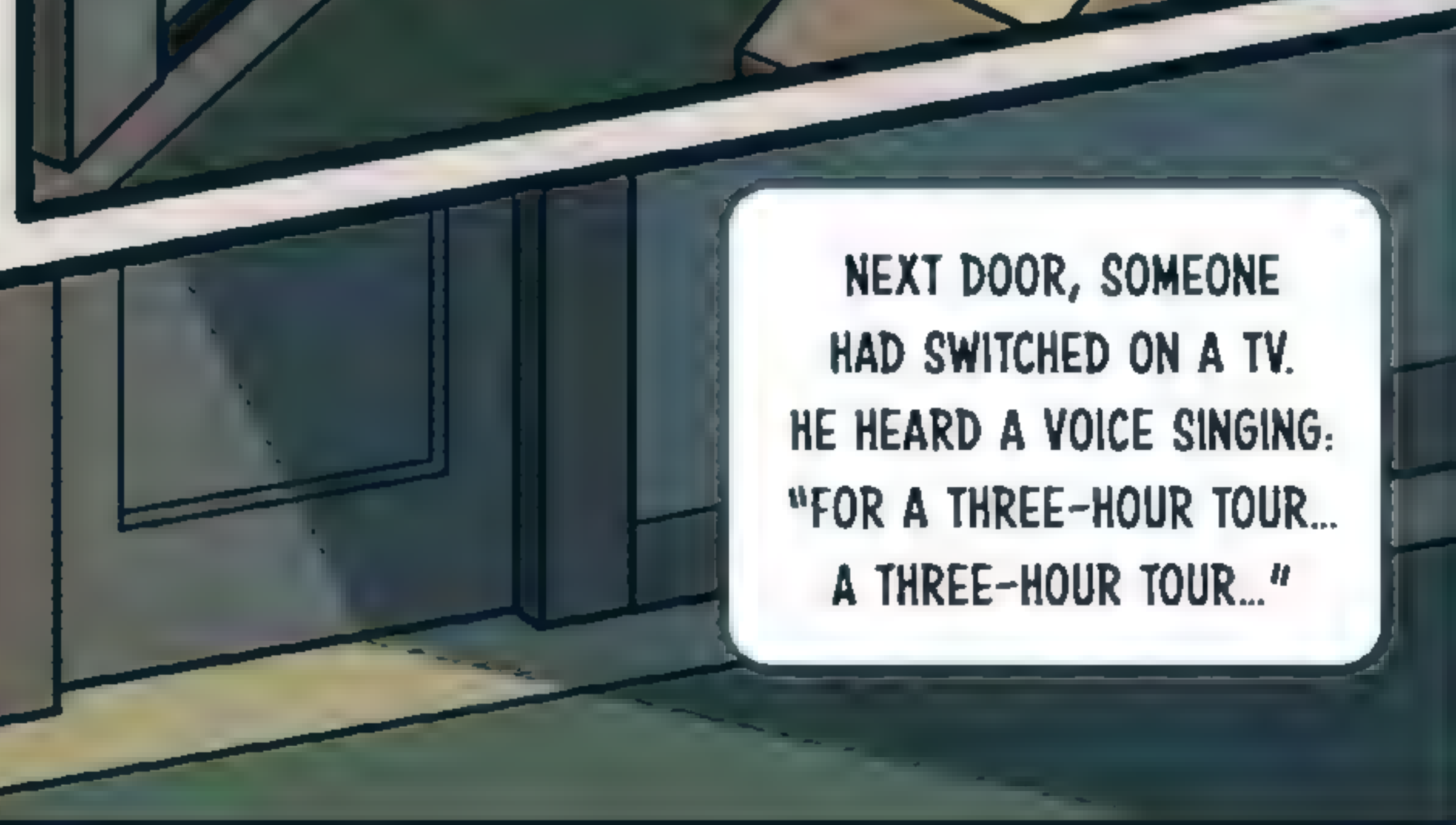
EVENTUALLY, JIM  
GOT UP AND  
HEADED HOME.



NOW THAT HE DIDN'T  
WORK AT THE GAS  
STATION ANYMORE,  
HE HAD NOWHERE  
TO GO.



HE UNLOCKED THE DOOR,  
TOSSED HIS JACKET  
OVER A CHAIR, AND SAT  
DOWN ON THE LOVE SEAT.



NEXT DOOR, SOMEONE  
HAD SWITCHED ON A TV.  
HE HEARD A VOICE SINGING:  
"FOR A THREE-HOUR TOUR...  
A THREE-HOUR TOUR..."





THE P.O. PULLED UP  
PROMPTLY AT FIVE.  
JIM GOT IN.



IN THE BACK SAT A YOUNG MAN  
WEARING HEAVY SUNGLASSES.  
HE LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW  
AS THE CAR PULLED ONTO  
THE PASADENA FREEWAY.



THE THREE OF THEM SAT IN SILENCE AS THE P.O.  
DROVE. WHEN THEY TURNED ONTO A RESIDENTIAL  
BLOCK, THE MAN IN THE BACK SEAT SPOKE UP...



IS THIS  
HER STREET?



YES.  
WE'RE HERE.



THE MAN STOOD  
ON THE DRIVEWAY  
AS THE P.O. RAPPED  
AT THE DOOR.



HE TOOK HIS  
SUNGLASSES OFF  
AND PUT THEM IN  
HIS BREAST POCKET.  
HE'D BEEN A FAMOUS  
MARTIAL ARTS  
FILM STAR...  
WHEN HE  
WAS ALIVE.





THE DOOR OPENED,  
AND CARLA  
USHERED THEM IN.



OUR SPECIAL GUEST  
WILL SIT HERE,  
ON MY LEFT,  
AND JIM,  
YOU'LL TAKE  
THE OTHER SEAT.



THE FOUR OF THEM  
JOINED HANDS AS CARLA  
BOWED HER HEAD AND  
BEGAN SOFTLY CHANTING.  
THE CRYSTAL BALL  
BEGAN TO PULSE AS HER  
VOICE ROSE AND FELL.



SLOWLY, HER HEAD LIFTED UP.  
HER EYES WERE ROLLED BACK  
SO THAT ONLY THE  
WHITES SHOWED.



THE ROOM WENT DARK.



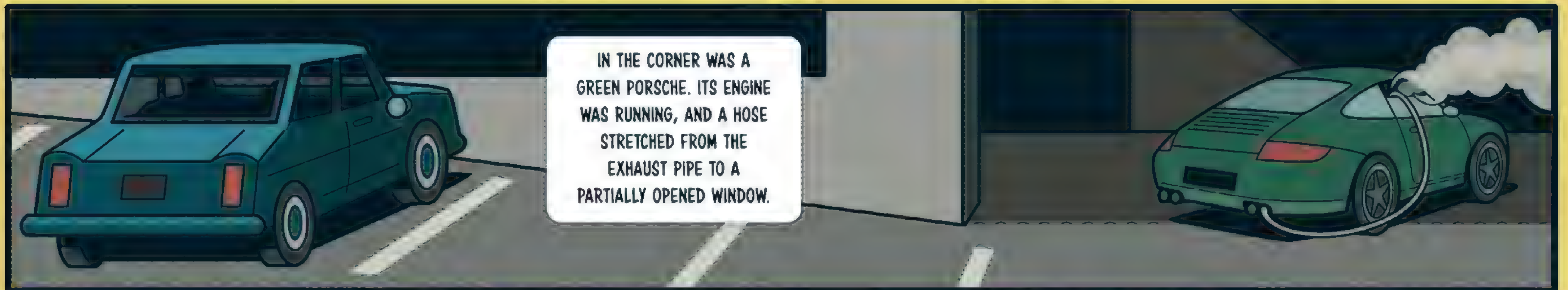
IN A FEW MINUTES, CARLA  
GOT UP AND LIT A CANDLE.



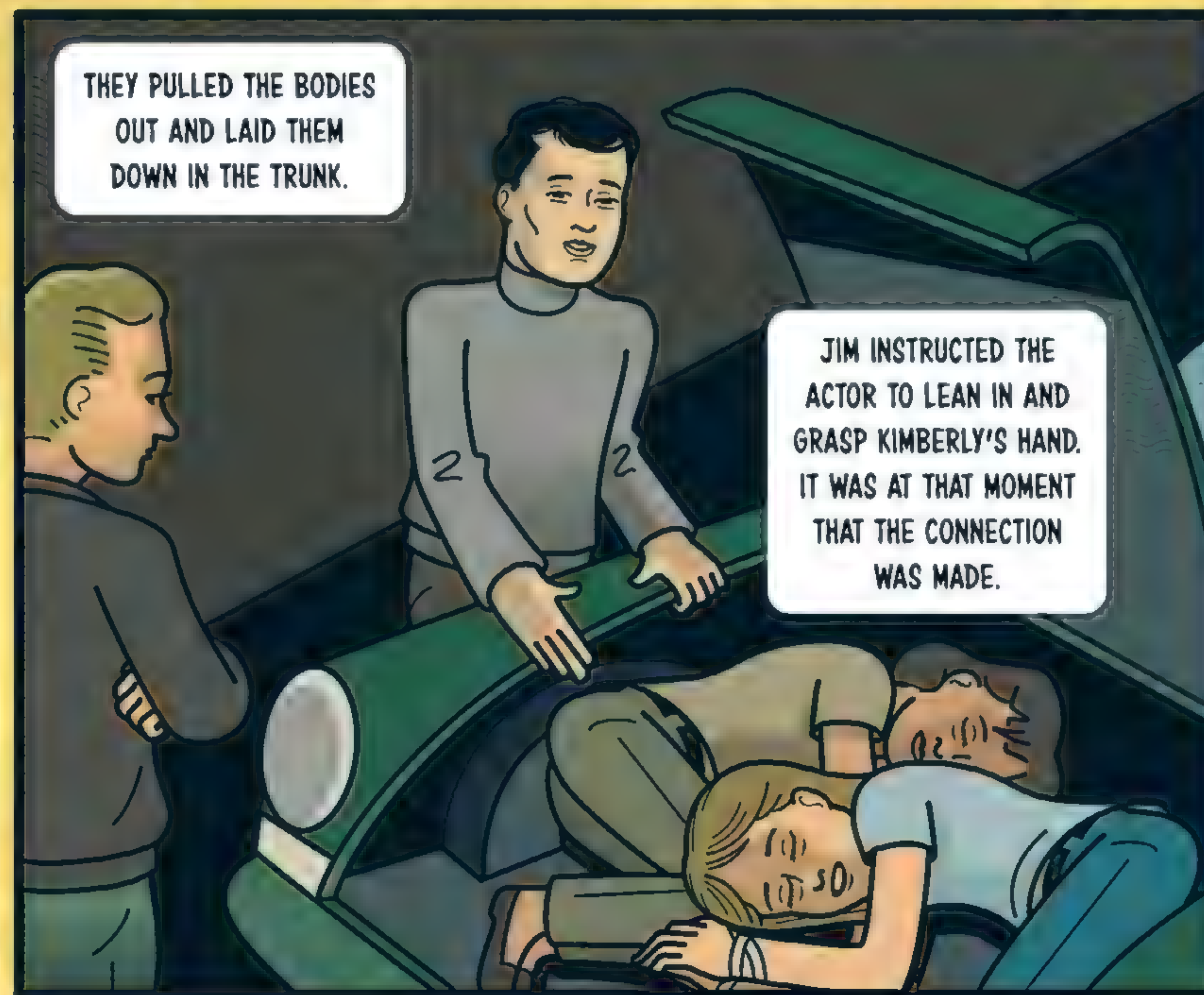
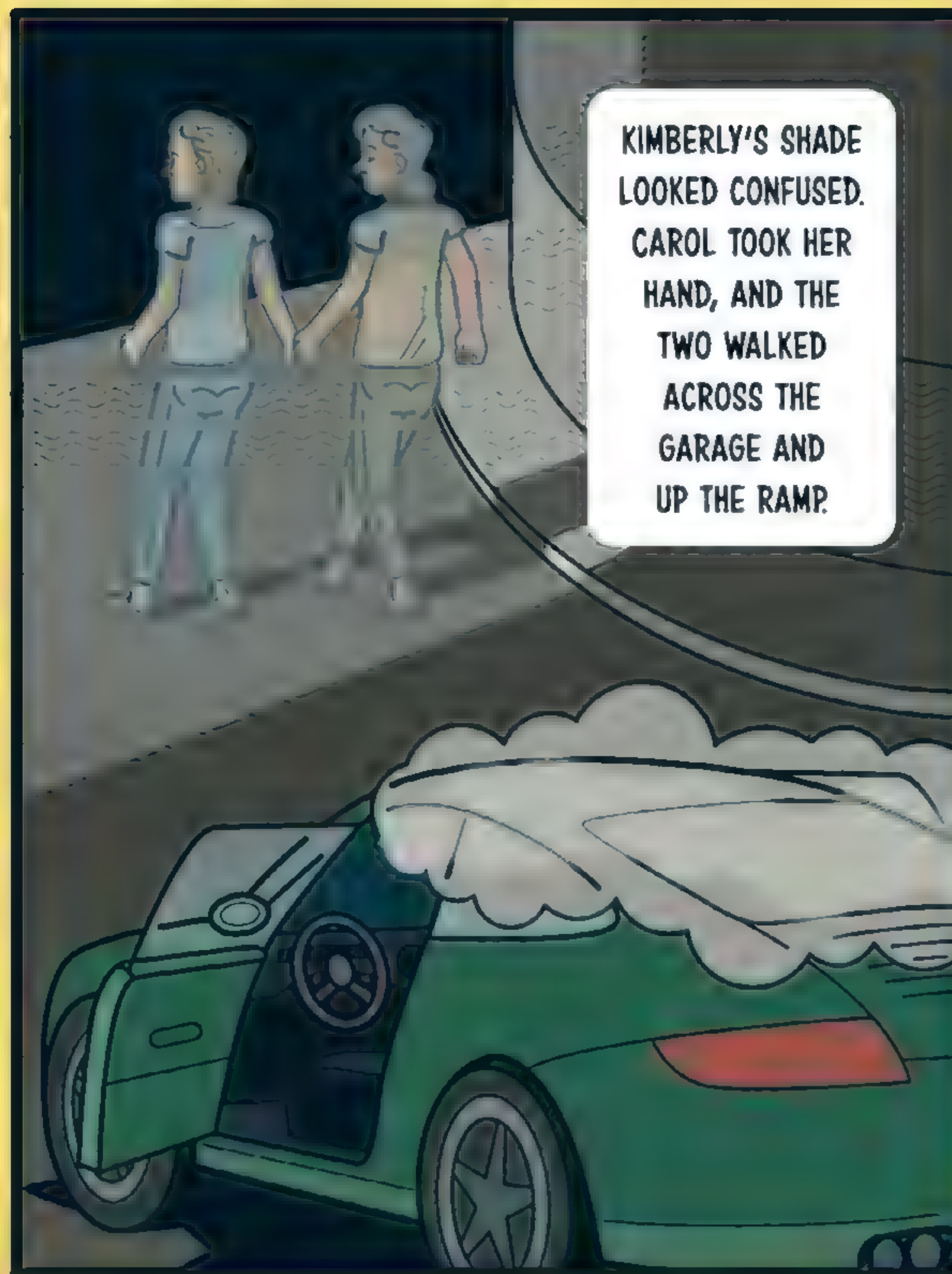
SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE  
LEFT IN THE ROOM.



FOREVER CALIFORNIA AND EVER  
CHAPTR-16



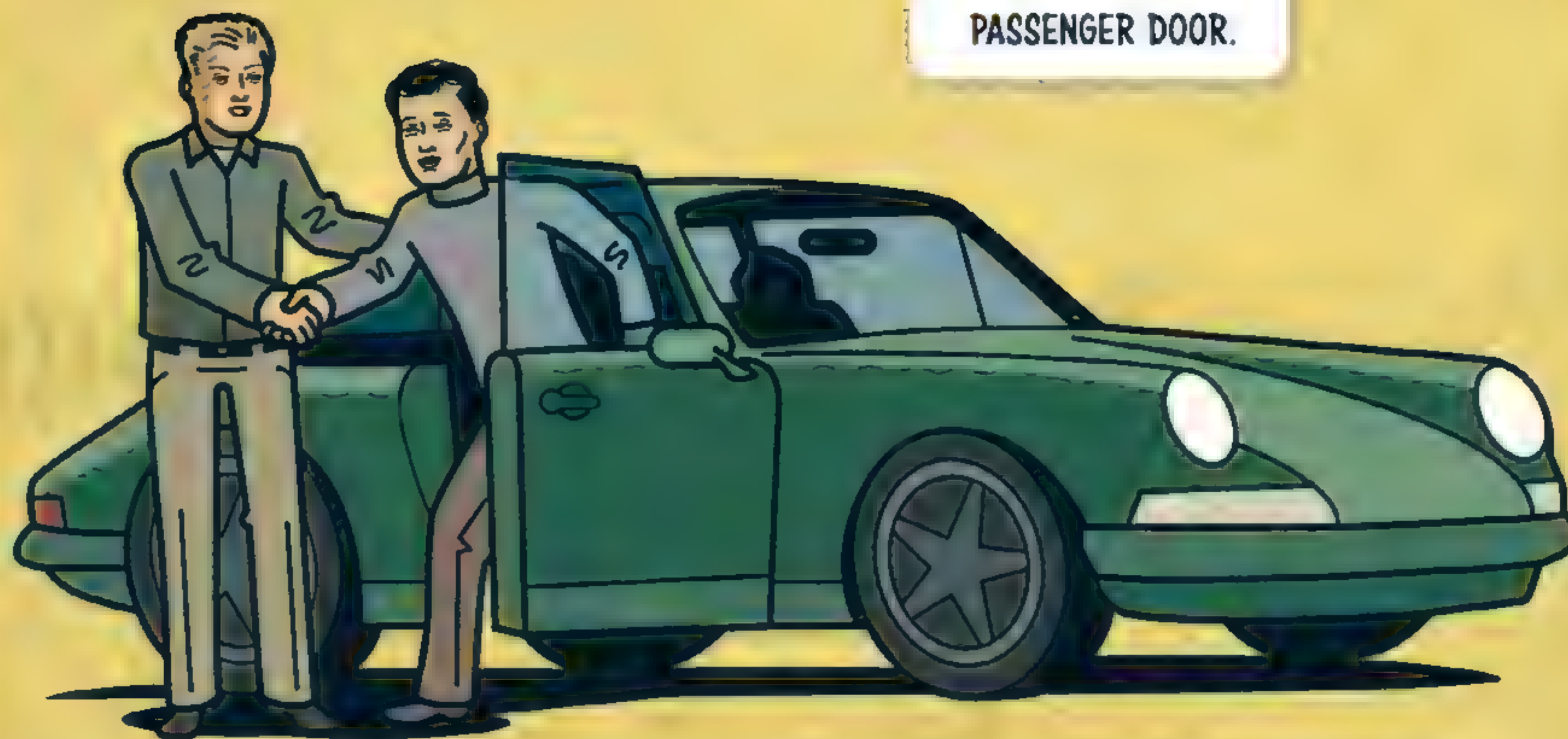




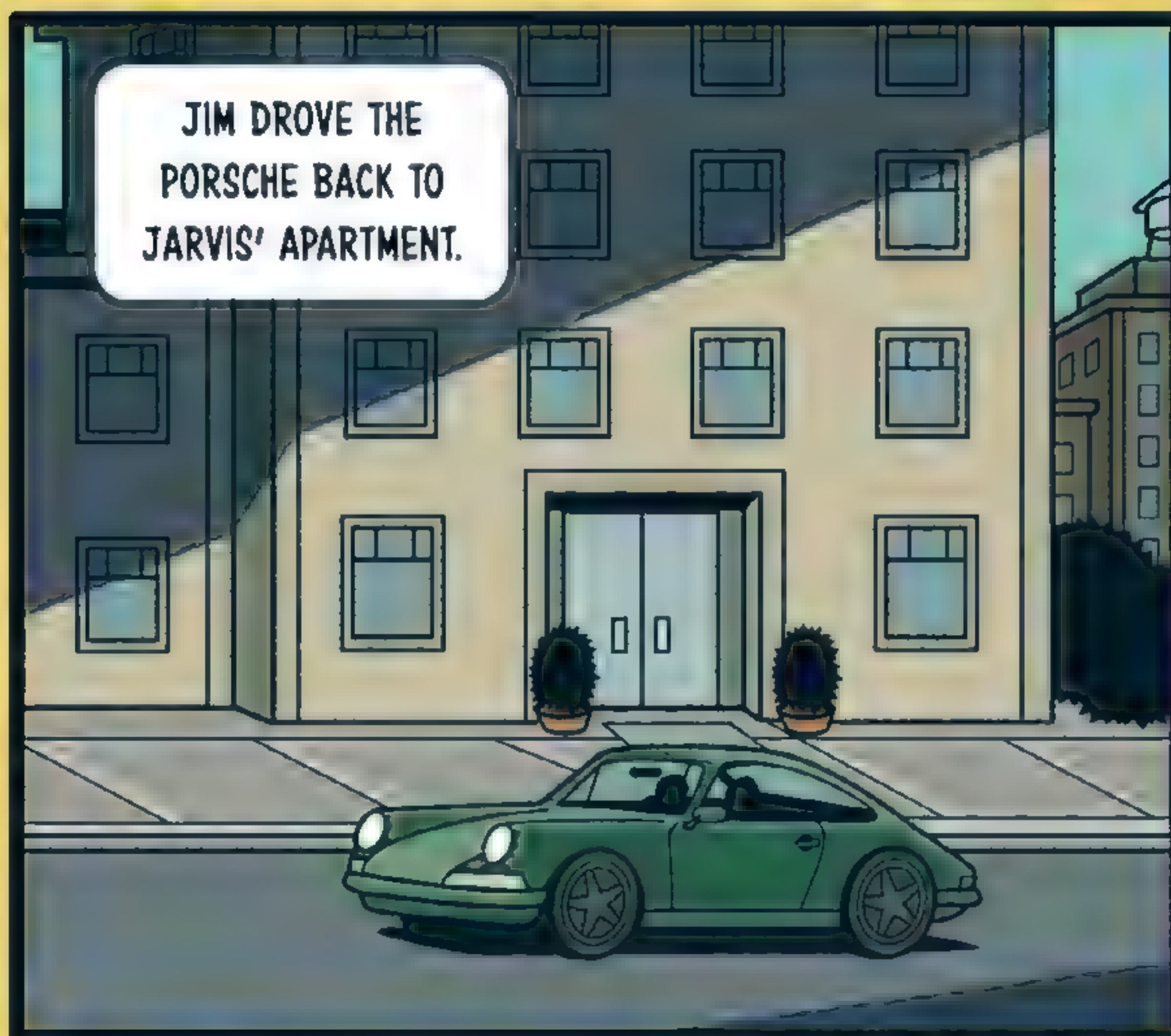




TWENTY MINUTES LATER,  
THEY PULLED UP IN FRONT  
OF THE RESTAURANT.



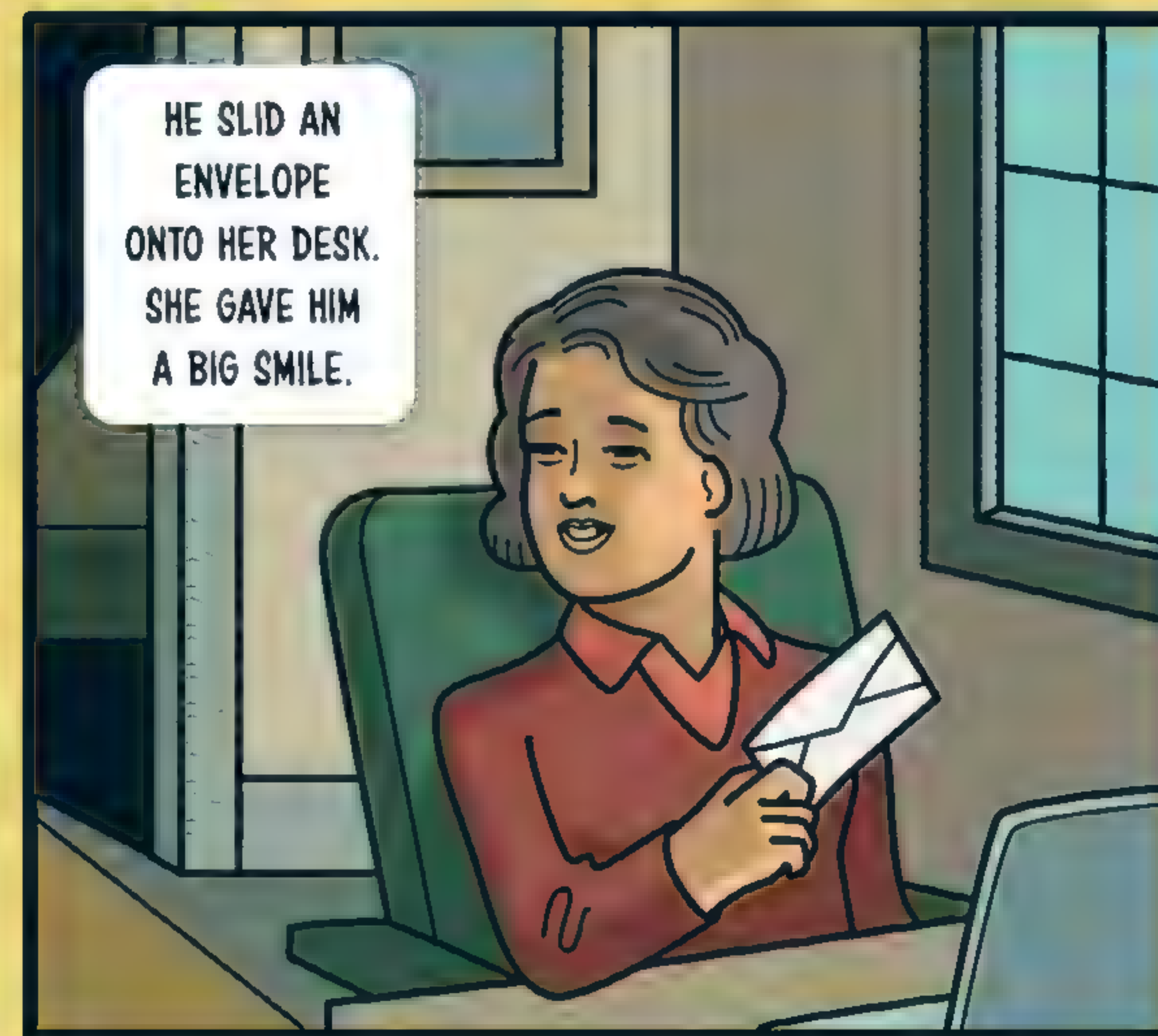
A MAN RAN OVER  
TO OPEN THE  
PASSENGER DOOR.



JIM DROVE THE  
PORSCHÉ BACK TO  
JARVIS' APARTMENT.



THE OLD WOMAN WAS  
SITTING IN THE OFFICE,  
ON THE PHONE WITH  
A PLUMBER.



HE SLID AN  
ENVELOPE  
ONTO HER DESK.  
SHE GAVE HIM  
A BIG SMILE.



WHEN HE OPENED  
JARVIS' DOOR, HE  
FELT ALMOST HAPPY  
TO BE THERE.



I'LL BET YOU'RE  
HUNGRY, HUH?



FROM AROUND  
THE CORNER,  
THE CAT SLINKED  
INTO THE ROOM.





THE P.O. STOOD UP  
AND WALKED OUT  
FROM BEHIND  
A DUMPSTER.

A FEW FEET AWAY  
WAS A BODY,  
HALF WRAPPED IN  
A SLEEPING BAG,  
WITH A SYRINGE  
STILL IN THE ARM.

THE SHADE  
COWERED  
IN THE  
DOORWAY,  
LOOKING  
UNSURE  
AND SCARED.



DON'T WORRY, YOU'RE NOT A VAMPIRE.  
THE SUN ISN'T GOING TO KILL YOU...  
YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.



TAKE A GOOD LOOK  
AT THE SKY. IT'S THE  
LAST TIME YOU'LL  
SEE A BLUE ONE.



THE SHADE DARTED  
OUT OF THE ALLEY.



THE P.O. ALSO HEADED OUT  
OF THE ALLEY AND ONTO  
HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD.



FROM THERE, HE SAW  
THE SIGN FOR THE  
RESTAURANT. AND OUT  
IN FRONT, BURGESS  
WAS WAITING FOR HIM.

THE P.O. OPENED  
THE DOOR AND  
GOT IN.

I SEWED  
THINGS UP  
WITH OUR  
RUNAWAY.

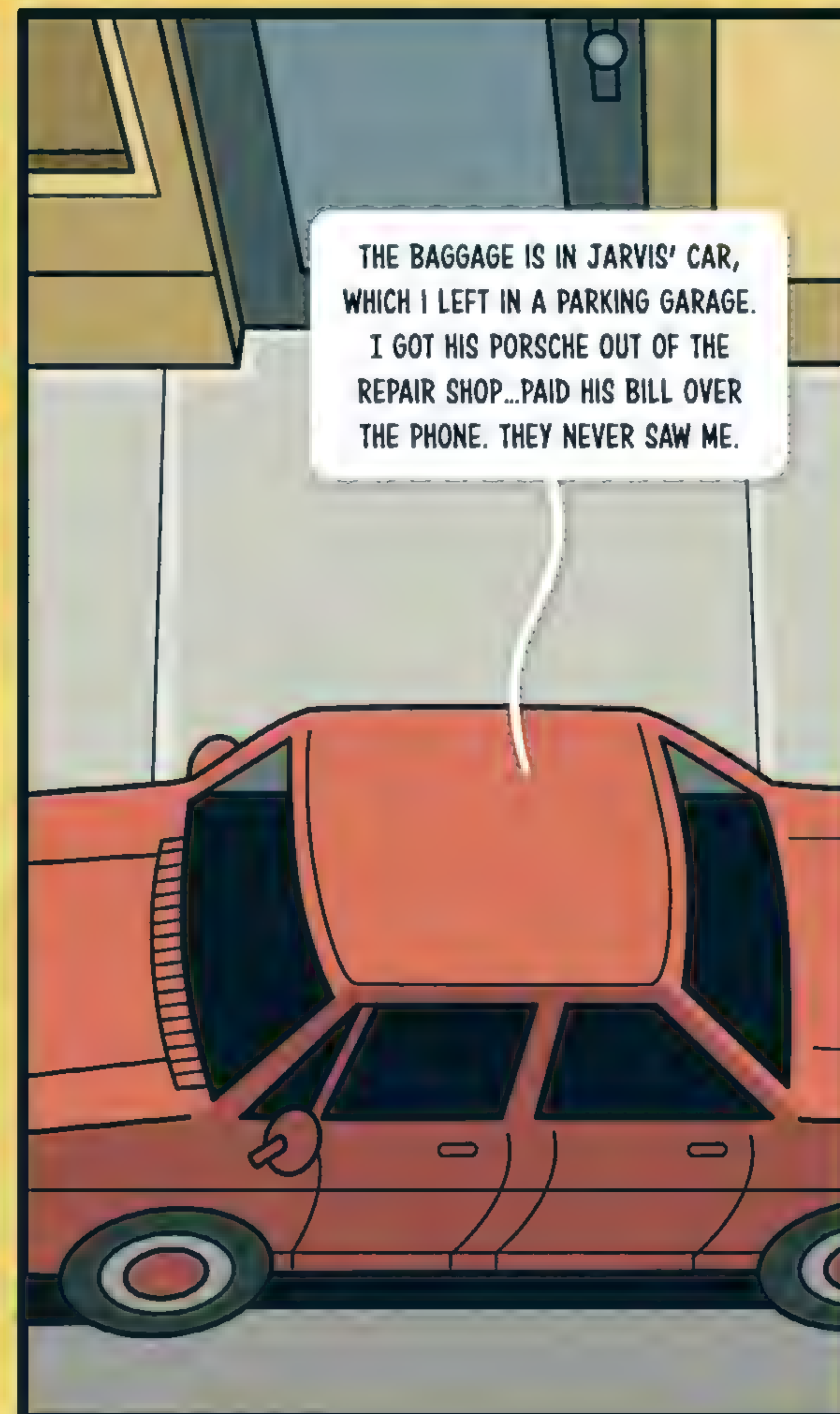


SHE HAD A PARTNER IN THE  
C.H.A.R.O.N. FIELD OFFICE.  
THAT'S WHY IT WAS SO HARD  
TO FIND HER.

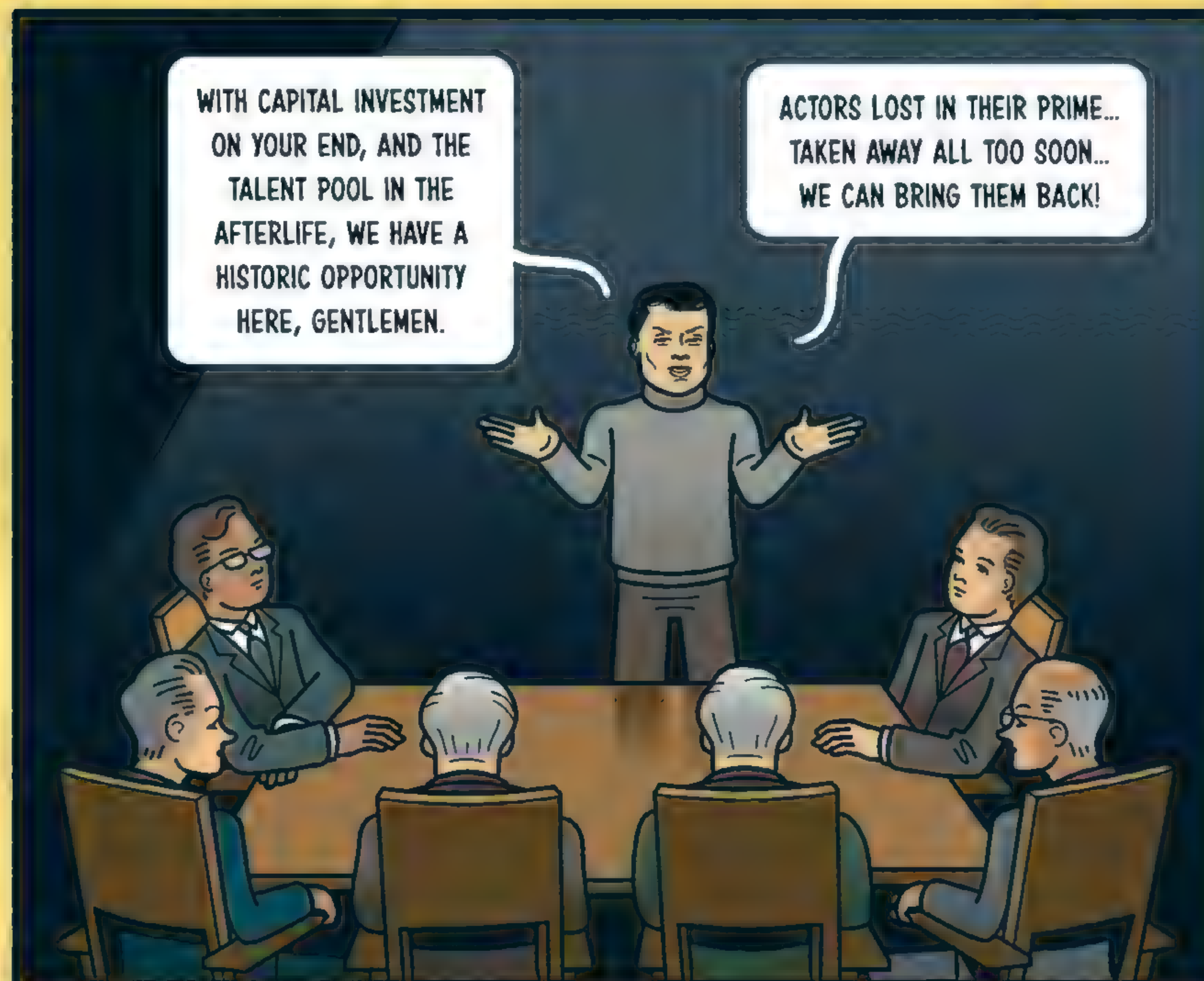
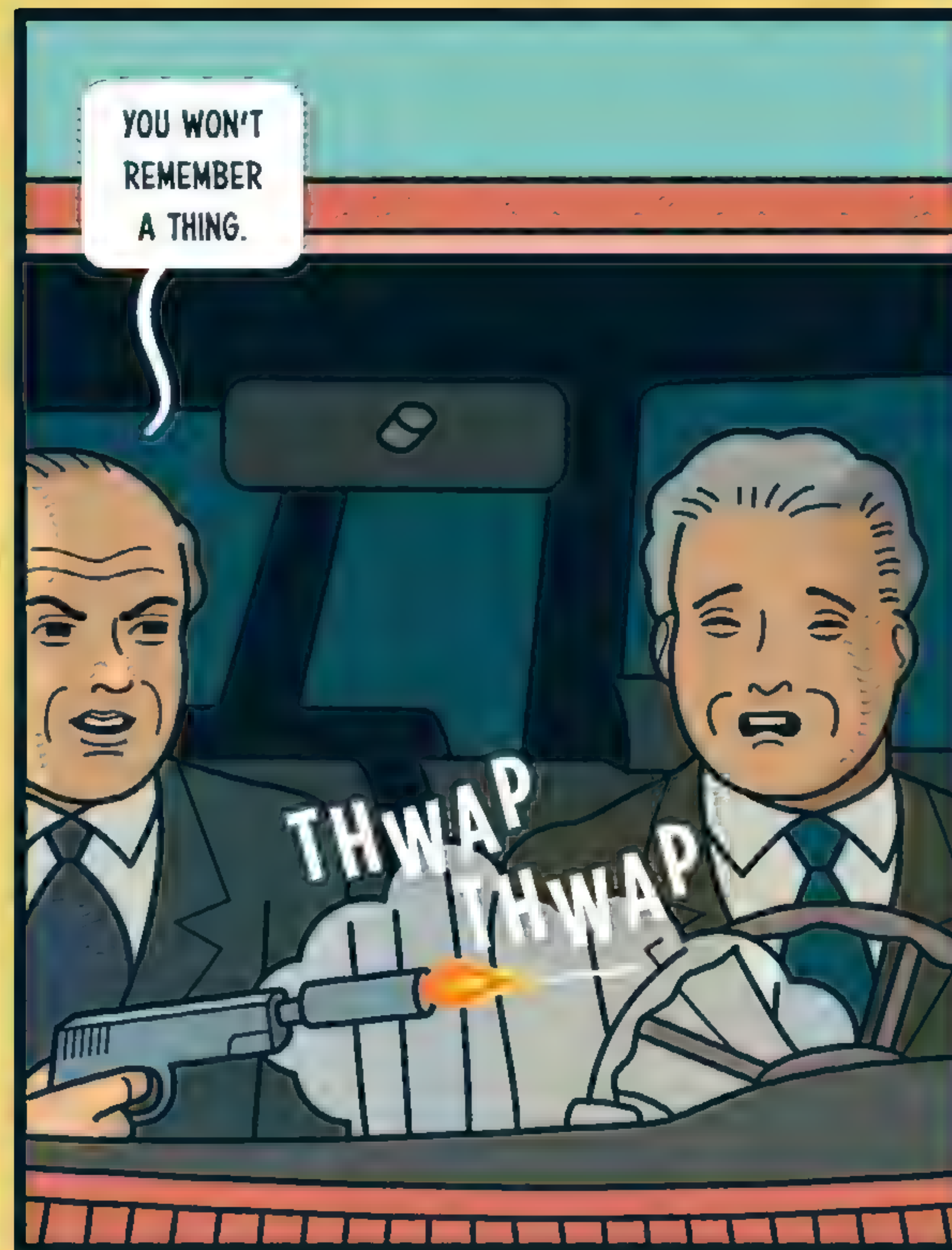
SO, SHE HAD INSIDE EYES ON US...  
BUT NOW THOSE EYES ARE CLOSED.  
WHAT DID YOU DO WITH THE BAGGAGE?



THE BAGGAGE IS IN JARVIS' CAR,  
WHICH I LEFT IN A PARKING GARAGE.  
I GOT HIS PORSCHE OUT OF THE  
REPAIR SHOP...PAID HIS BILL OVER  
THE PHONE. THEY NEVER SAW ME.















EVERYTHING OUR FRIEND  
SAID IS TRUE.



IT'S A CHANCE TO RECLAIM TALENT  
FROM THE GRIP OF DEATH  
AND EXTEND THEIR REVENUE  
STREAMS INFINITELY.



AND GENTLEMEN, YOU NEED NOT  
LIMIT YOURSELVES TO ACTORS  
ALREADY DEAD. LOOK AROUND  
AT THE LIVING ACTORS TODAY...



...WOULDN'T YOU LIKE FOR  
YOUR TOP TALENT TO  
STAY THE SAME AGE AS  
THEY ARE TODAY? KEEPING  
THEM IN HIGH-EARNING  
ROLES FOR DECADES?



GENTLEMEN, I SUBMIT  
TO YOU, THAT TIME  
HAS ARRIVED.  
C.H.A.R.O.N. IS  
READY TO PROVIDE  
THAT SERVICE TO  
YOU TODAY.

BY SENDING AN ACTOR  
OVER AS A SHADE...  
WE CAN BRING THEM  
BACK WITH THEIR  
APPEARANCE FIXED  
TO THEIR MOMENT  
OF DEPARTURE.  
FOREVER.

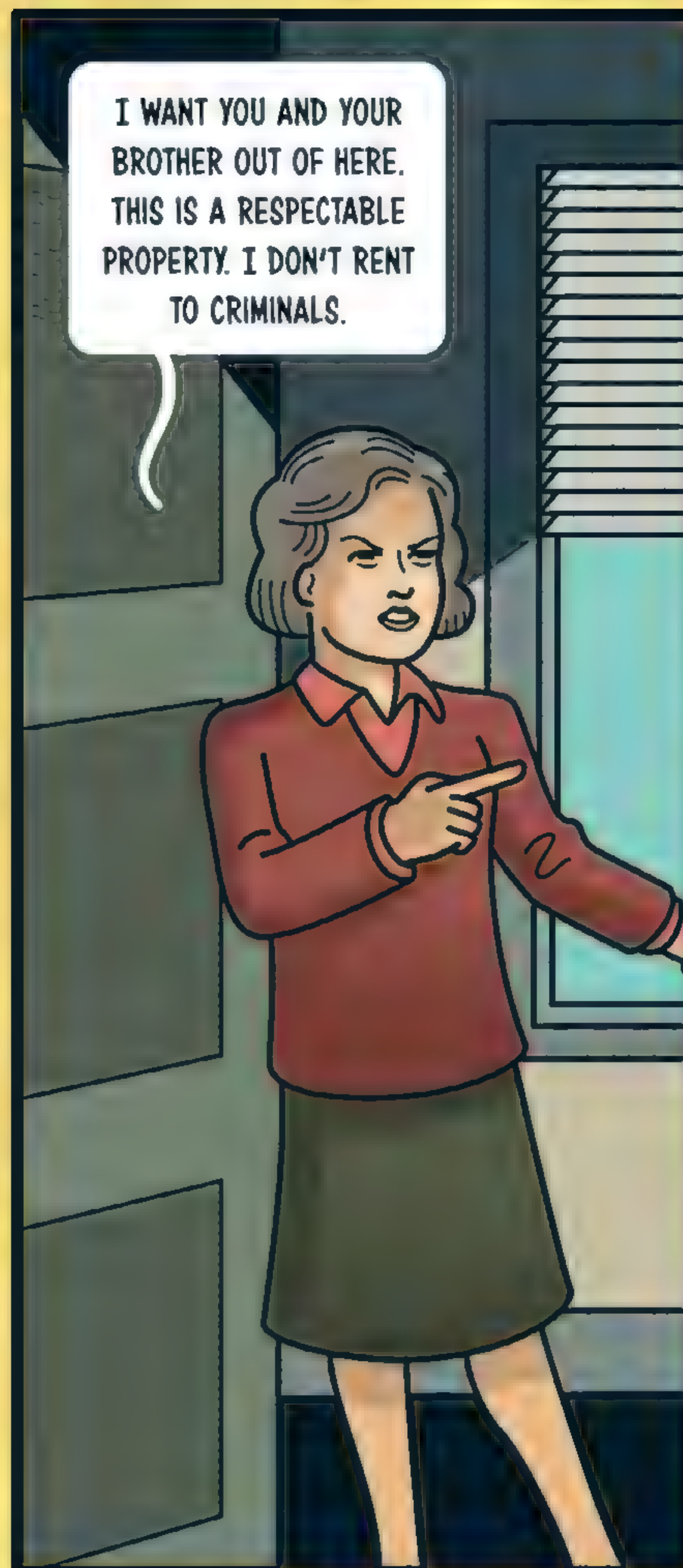




JIM WAS SITTING IN JARVIS' APARTMENT WHEN THERE WAS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. OPENING IT, HE FACED A MAN HOLDING A BADGE.



ROGER JARVIS, I HAVE A WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST IN THE ABDUCTION AND MURDERS OF KIMBERLY WHITE, CAROL ROSS, AND POLICE LIEUTENANT FRANK BURGESS.



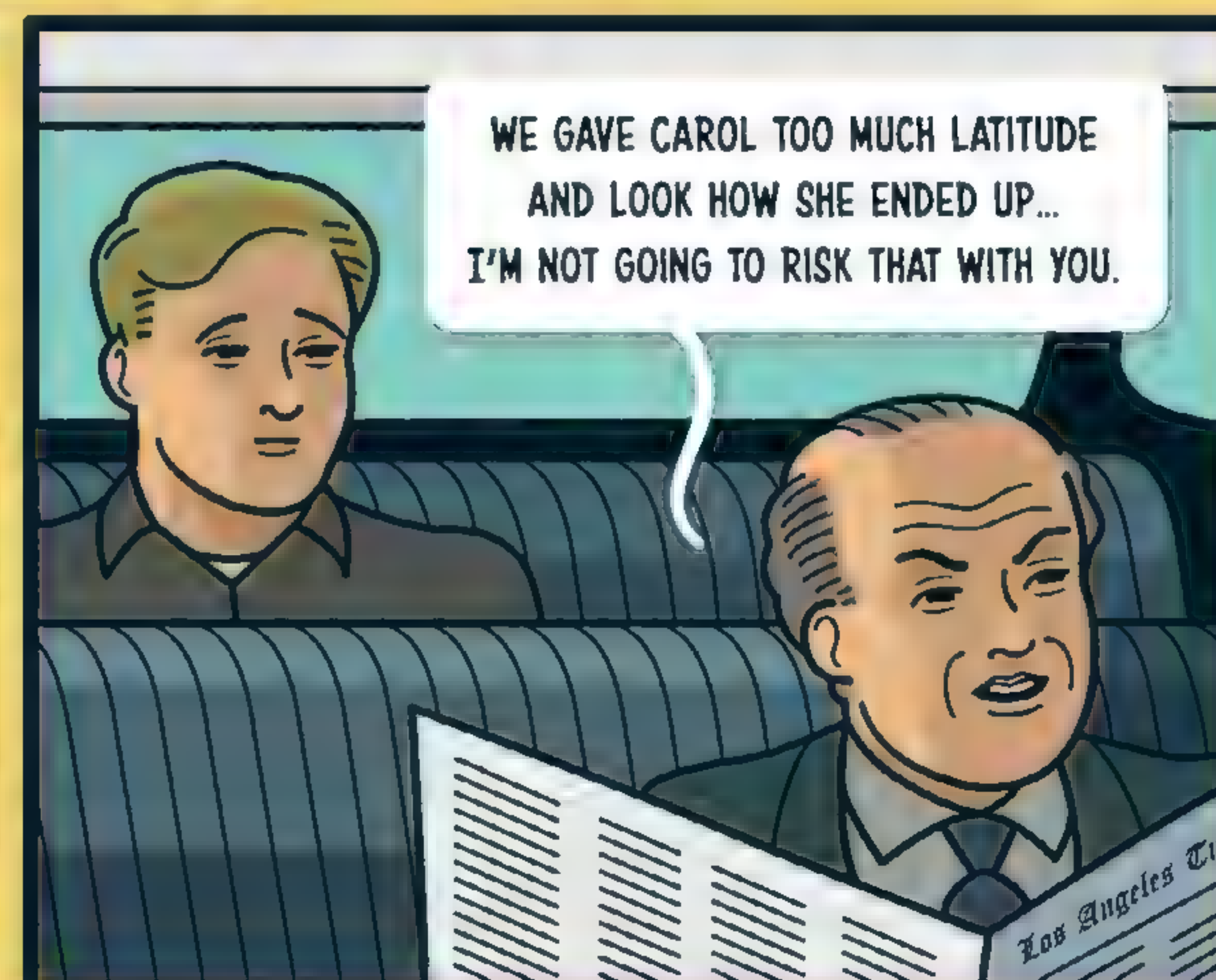
I WANT YOU AND YOUR BROTHER OUT OF HERE. THIS IS A RESPECTABLE PROPERTY. I DON'T RENT TO CRIMINALS.



LOOKS LIKE THE DODGERS ARE IN THE TANK AGAIN. SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE...

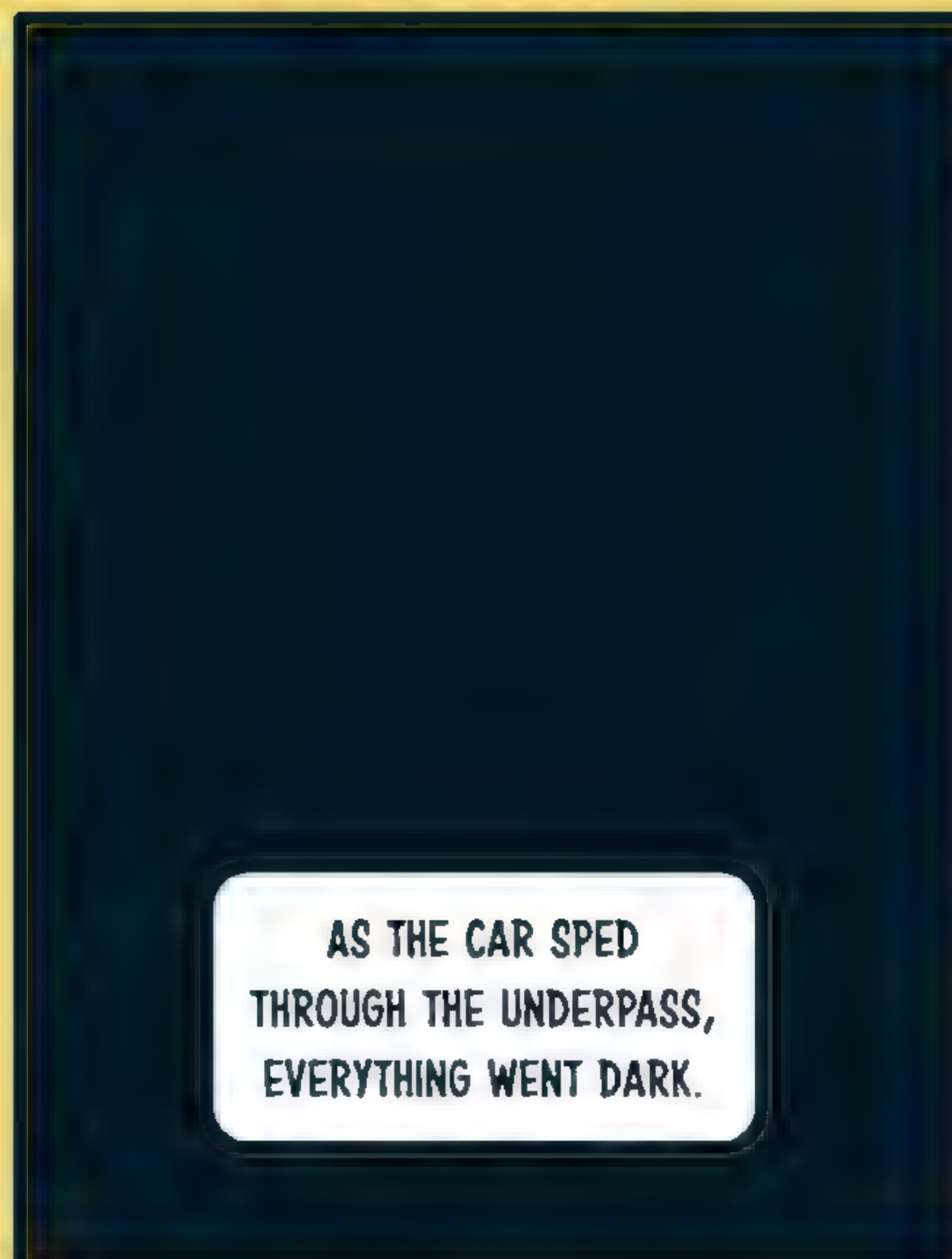
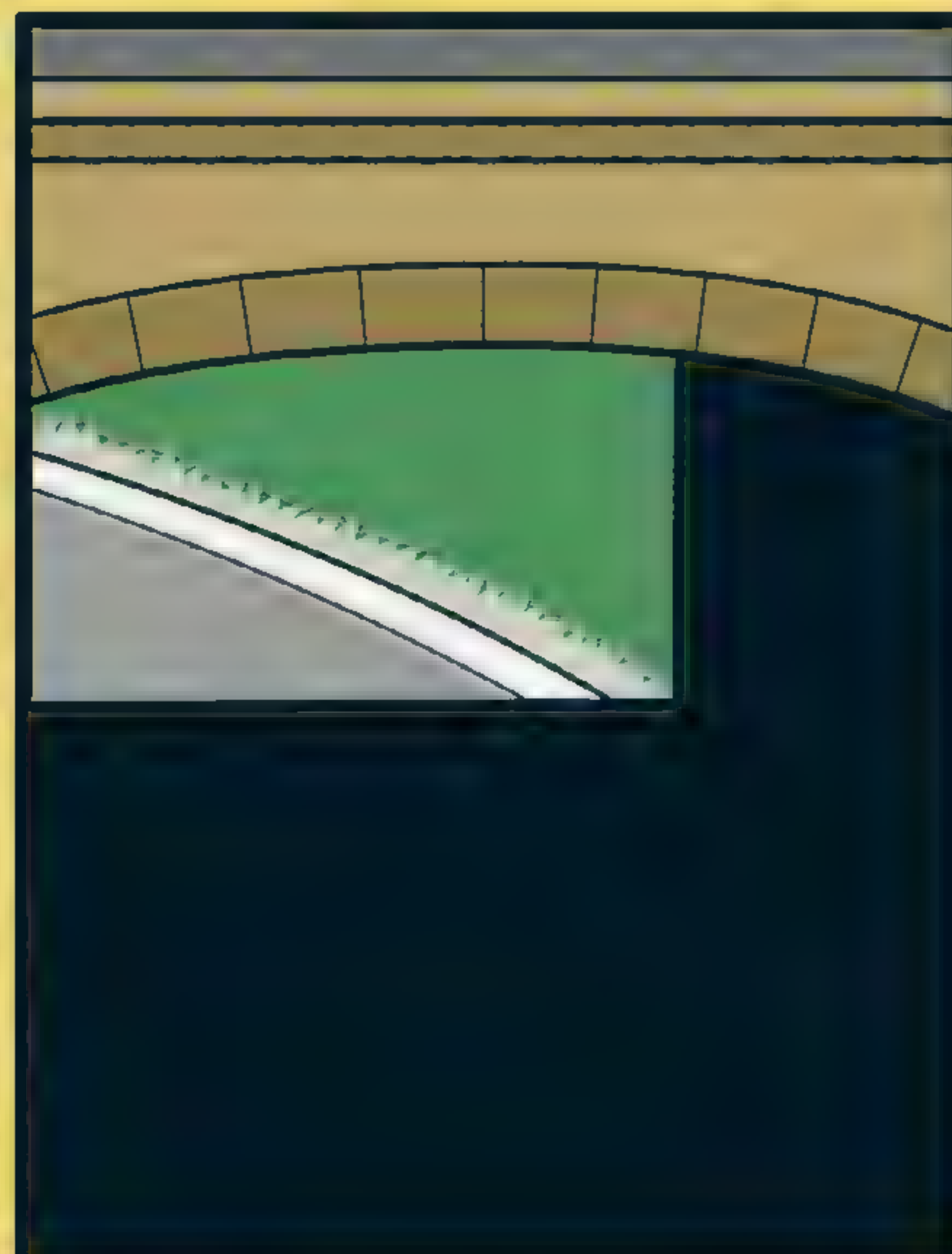
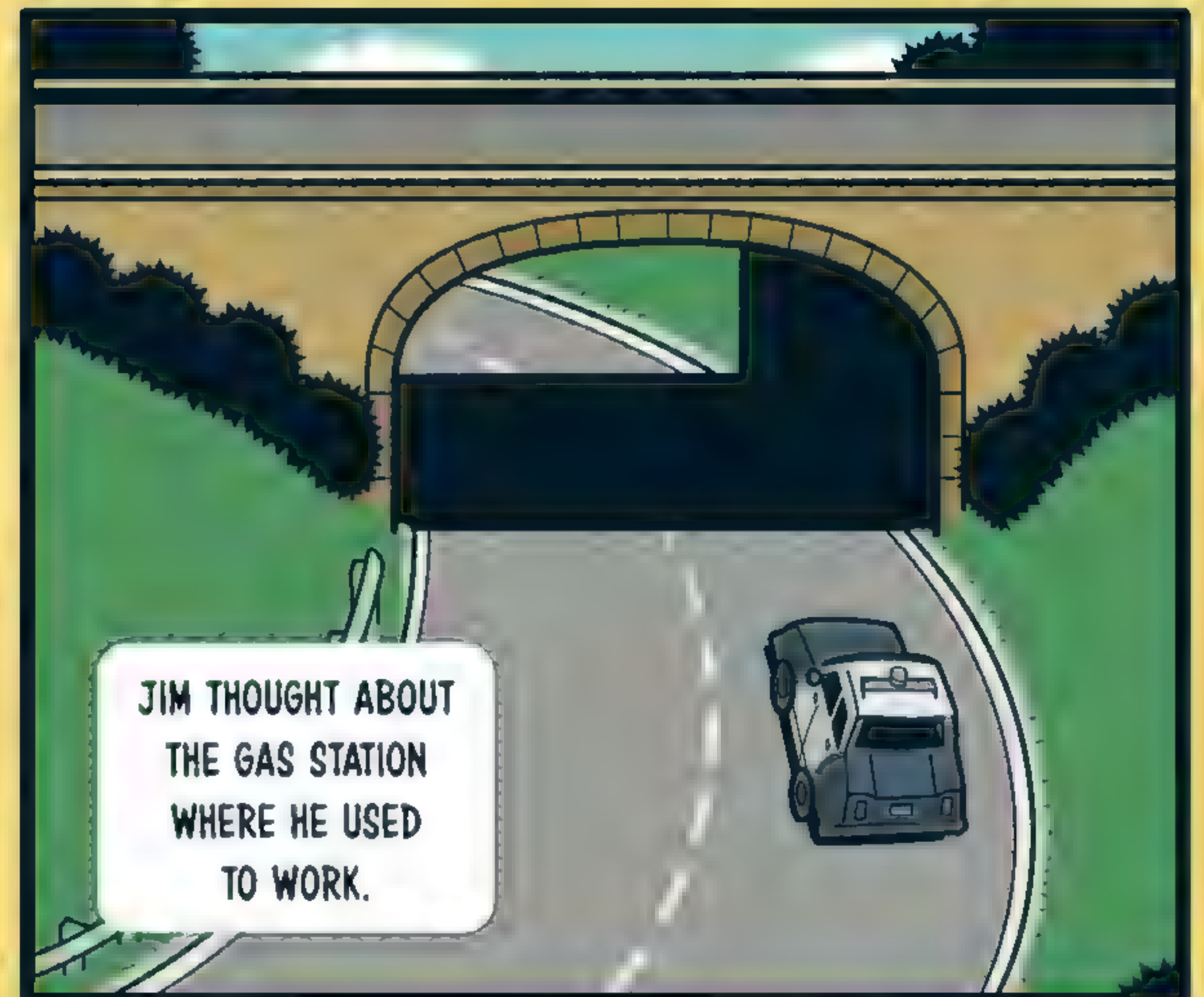
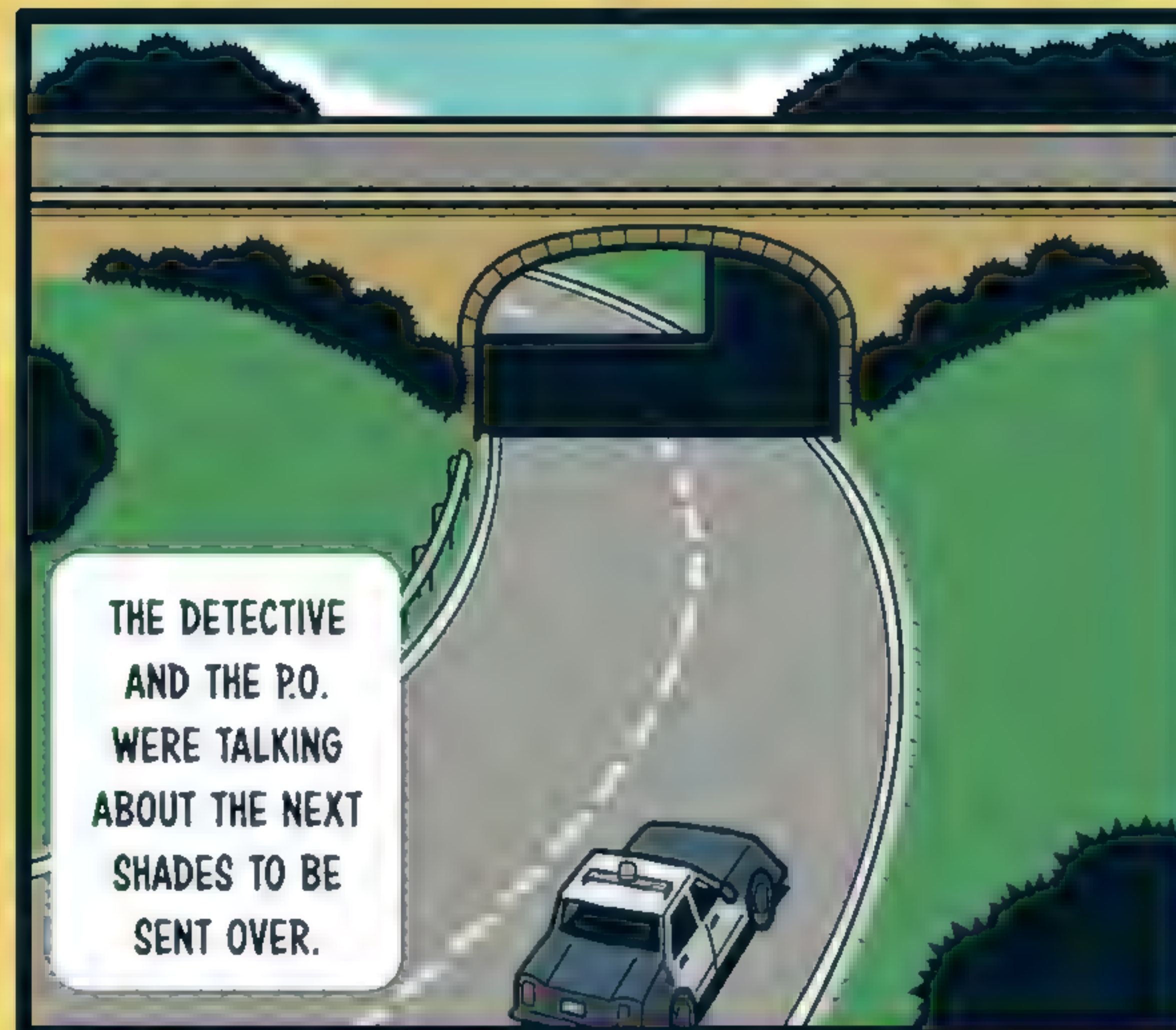
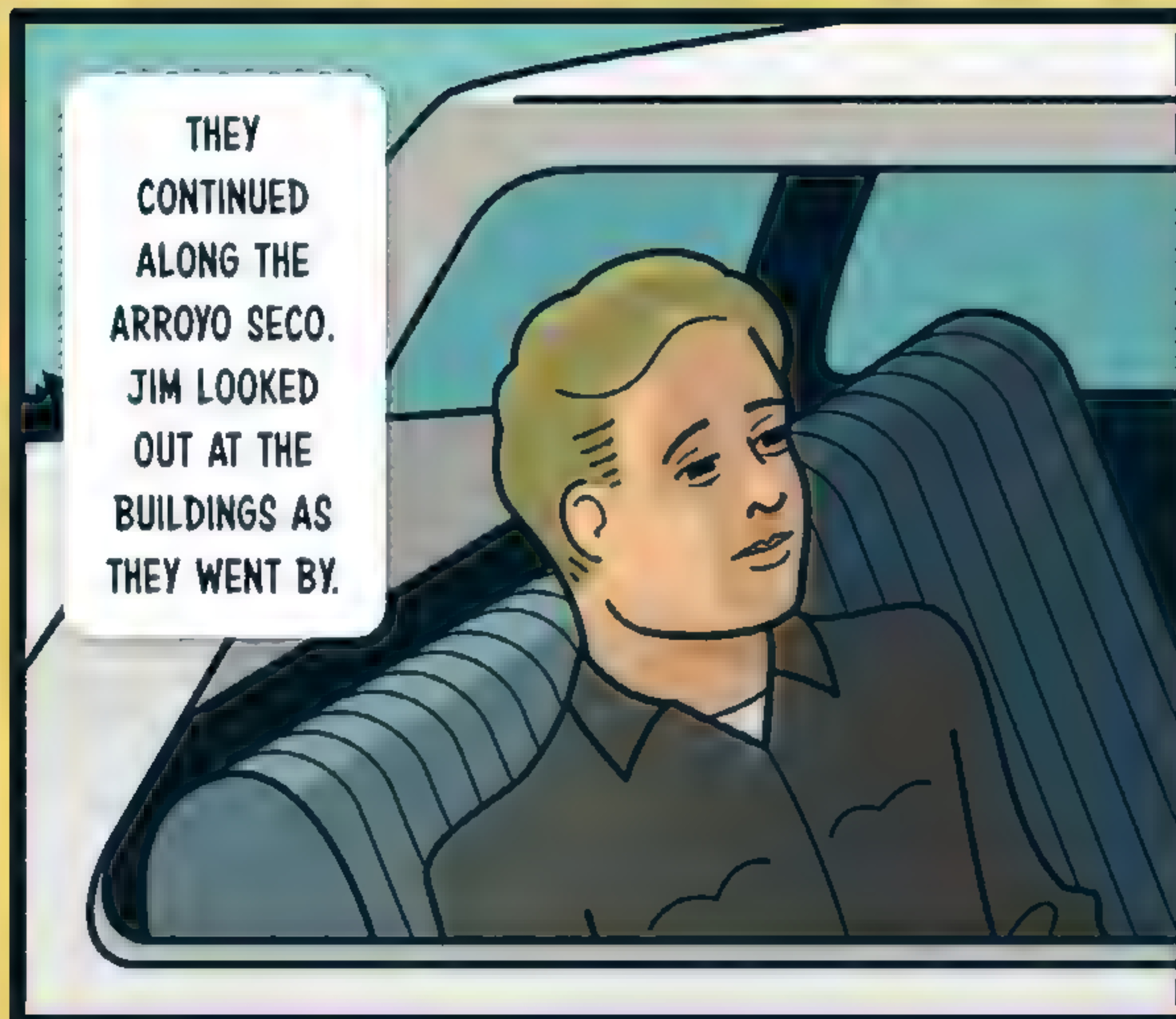


...LIKE OUR RELATIONSHIP, JIM. YOU'RE GOING TO KEEP ON WORKING FOR ME. BUT IN A MORE CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT.

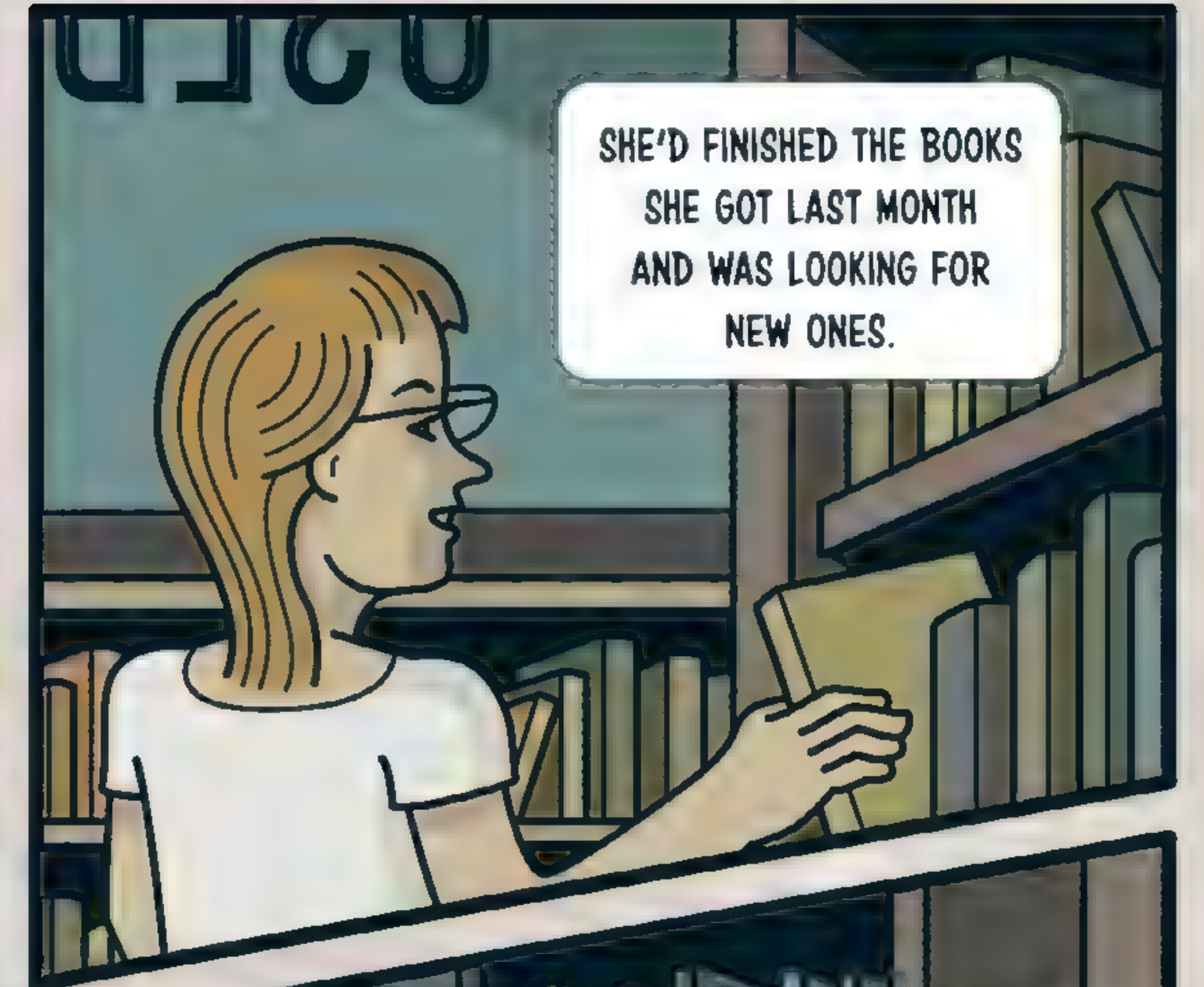
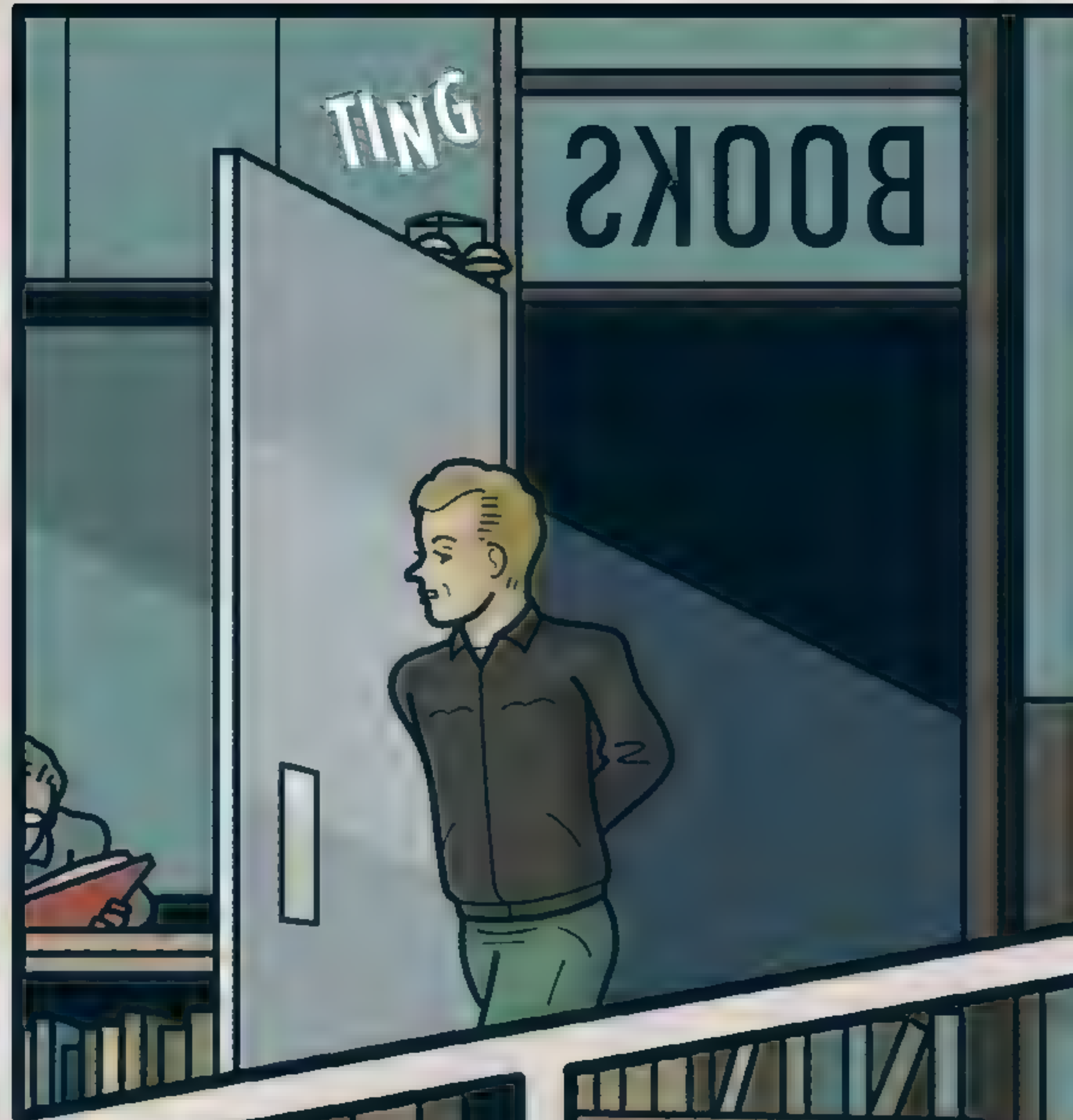


WE GAVE CAROL TOO MUCH LATITUDE AND LOOK HOW SHE ENDED UP... I'M NOT GOING TO RISK THAT WITH YOU.









SHE'D FINISHED THE BOOKS  
SHE GOT LAST MONTH  
AND WAS LOOKING FOR  
NEW ONES.



TING

SHE'D BEEN ASSIGNED  
A PART-TIME JOB AT A  
DRY CLEANER AND THAT  
SUITED HER JUST FINE.



SHE LOOKED  
OVER AND  
SAW JIM,  
HUNCHED  
OVER WITH  
HIS ARMS  
BEHIND HIS  
BACK. THEN  
SHE SAW THE  
HANDCUFFS.

I SAW YOU FROM OUTSIDE.  
I CAME IN TO ASK FOR  
YOUR HELP...

IF WE CAN GET OUT OF  
HERE WITHOUT AROUSING  
SUSPICION...WE COULD  
GO TO THE GAS STATION...  
THERE ARE TOOLS THERE...



THE CLERK  
WAS STILL  
BURIED IN  
HIS BOOK.

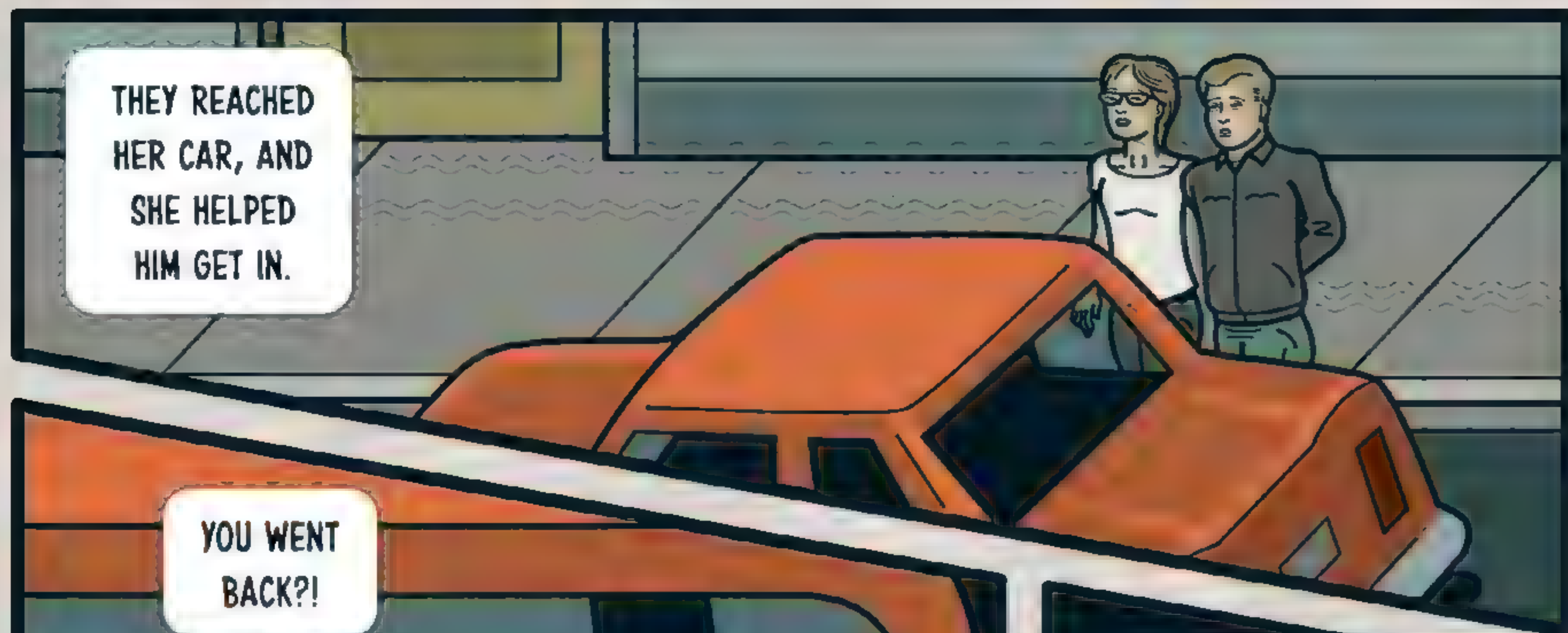


I'LL DISTRACT  
THE CLERK  
WHILE YOU  
SLIP OUT...



MY CAR IS  
JUST UP  
AHEAD.





THEY REACHED  
HER CAR, AND  
SHE HELPED  
HIM GET IN.



SHE DROVE TO  
THE GAS STATION.

DID THE  
POLICE  
DO THIS  
TO YOU?

YEAH, FROM THE  
LIVING SIDE...



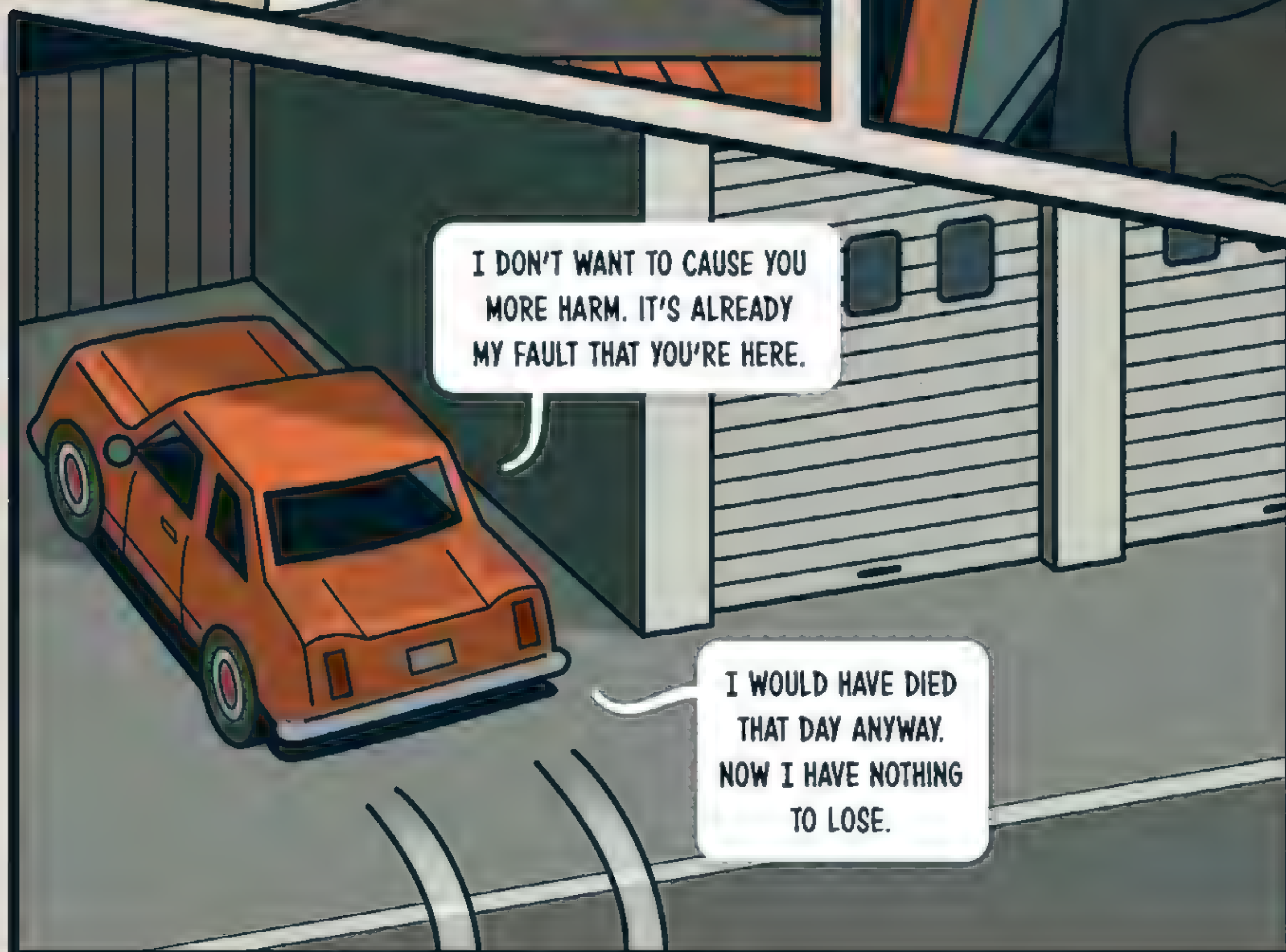
YOU WENT  
BACK?!



THERE IS A WAY TO DO IT, BUT IT'S DANGEROUS.  
THE PEOPLE RUNNING IT ARE CORRUPT AND THEY'RE  
COPS, WHICH MAKES IT DOUBLY DANGEROUS.



SO, COULD I  
GO BACK?



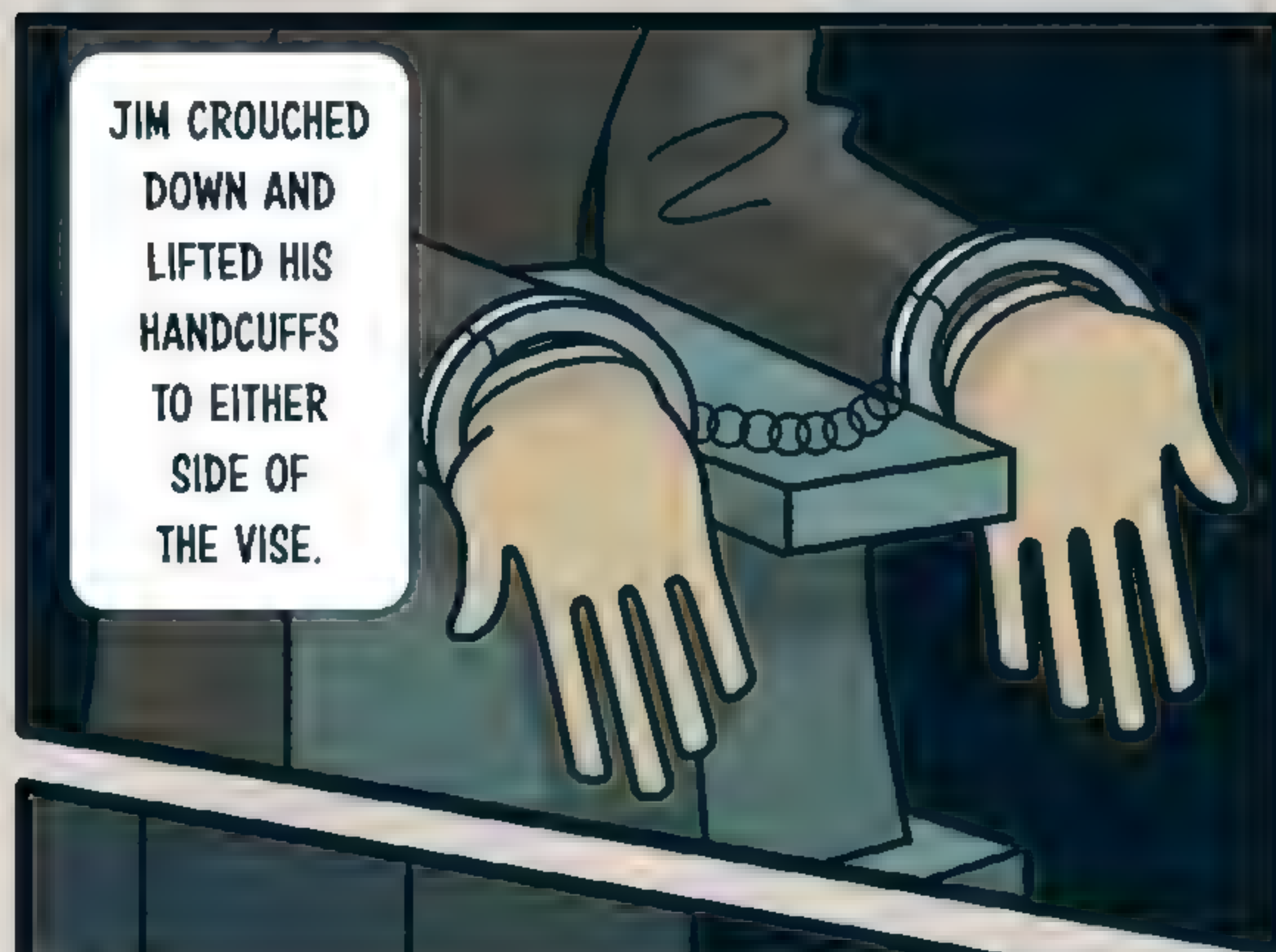
I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE YOU  
MORE HARM. IT'S ALREADY  
MY FAULT THAT YOU'RE HERE.

I WOULD HAVE DIED  
THAT DAY ANYWAY.  
NOW I HAVE NOTHING  
TO LOSE.



THE NIGHT MAN WAS  
SURPRISED TO SEE  
JIM. HE HEMMED AND  
HAWED BUT FINALLY  
AGREED TO OPEN  
THE REPAIR BAY  
FOR THEM.

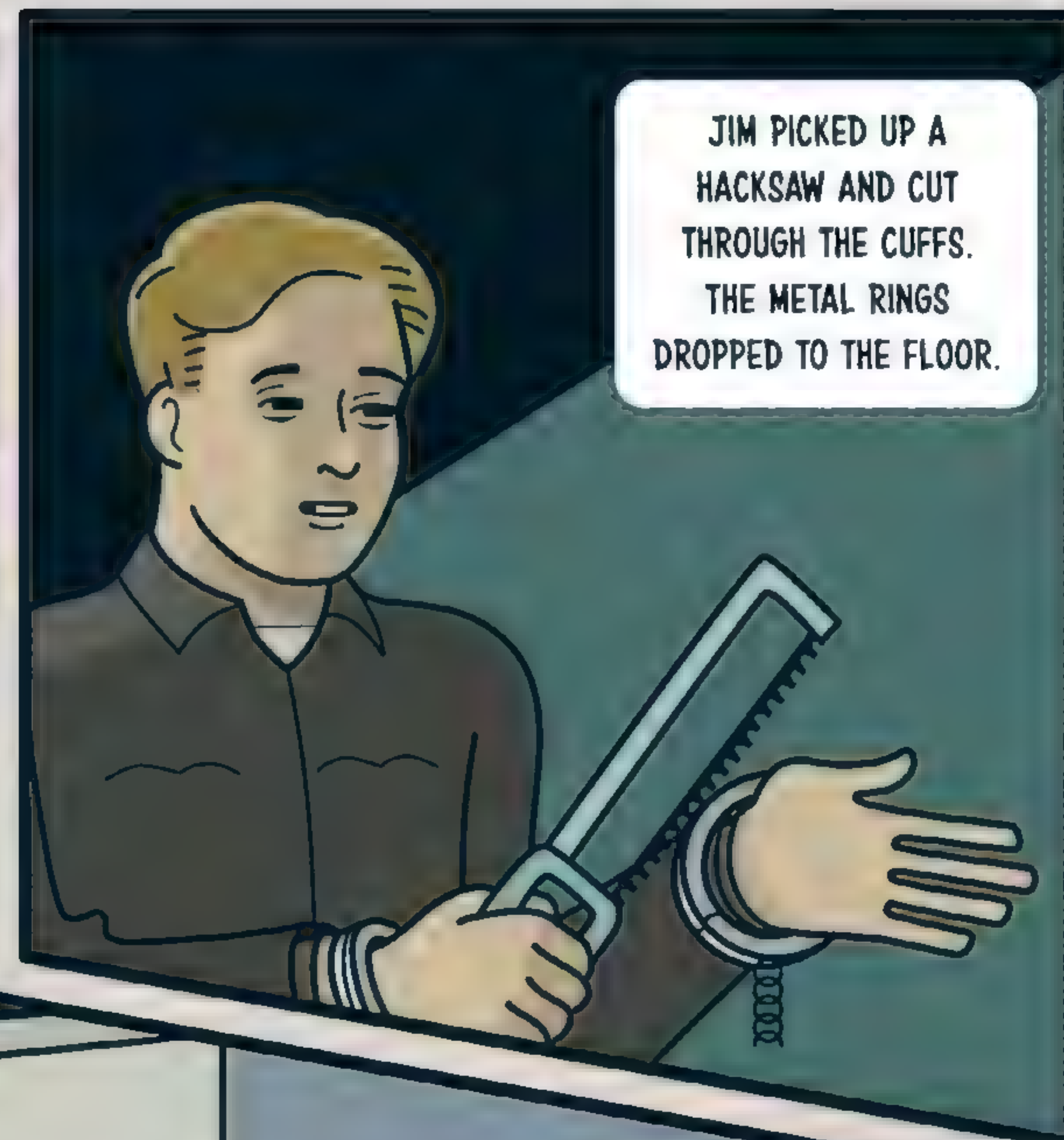




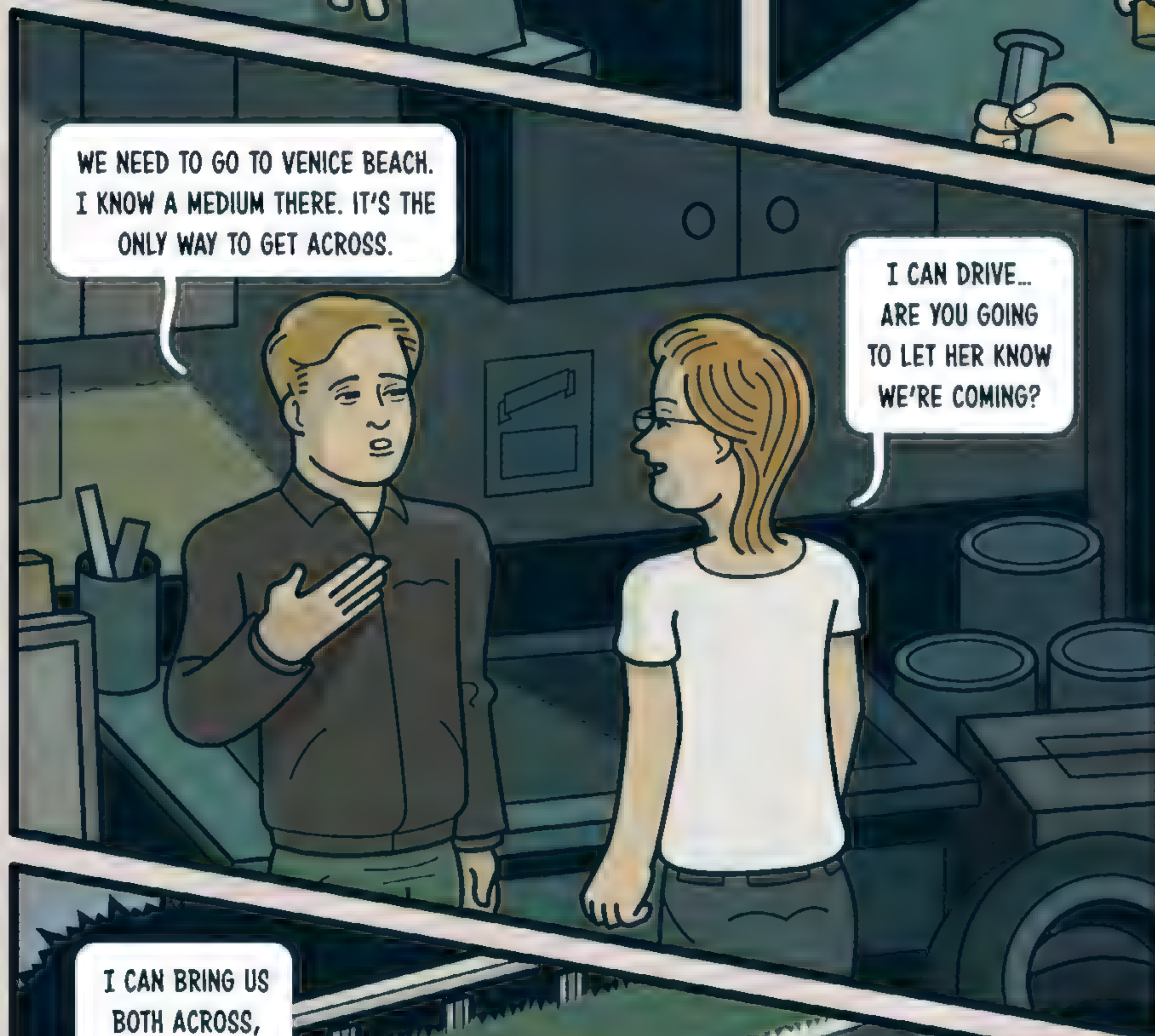
JIM CROUCHED DOWN AND LIFTED HIS HANDCUFFS TO EITHER SIDE OF THE VISE.



OLIVIA TOOK A DOZEN WHACKS AT THE LINKS UNTIL THEY BROKE APART.



JIM PICKED UP A HACKSAW AND CUT THROUGH THE CUFFS. THE METAL RINGS DROPPED TO THE FLOOR.



WE NEED TO GO TO VENICE BEACH. I KNOW A MEDIUM THERE. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GET ACROSS.

I CAN DRIVE... ARE YOU GOING TO LET HER KNOW WE'RE COMING?



NO, NOT THIS TIME.



I CAN BRING US BOTH ACROSS, BUT IF THEY CATCH YOU...





JIM MADE A FEW RAPS AT THE DOOR. NOTHING. HE KNOCKED AGAIN. STILL NOTHING.



JIM TRIED THE DOORKNOB AND FOUND THAT IT WAS UNLOCKED.



SUDDENLY, A LIGHT SWITCHED ON.

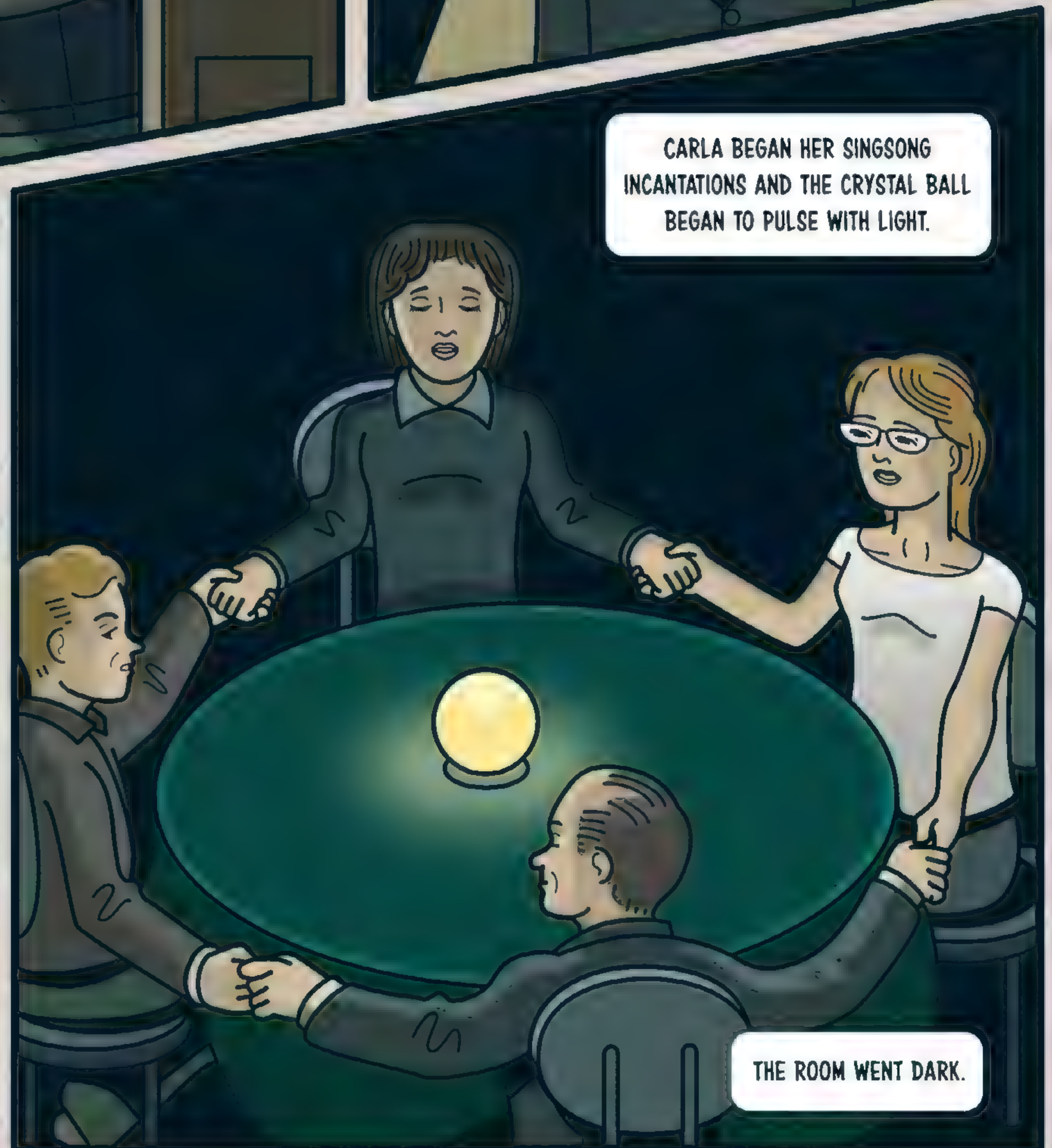
PLANNING A LITTLE IMPROMPTU TRIP?



OKAY, YOU CAN COME OUT NOW, CARLA.



CARLA CAME OUT FROM BEHIND THE DRAPES. SHE LOOKED FRIGHTENED.



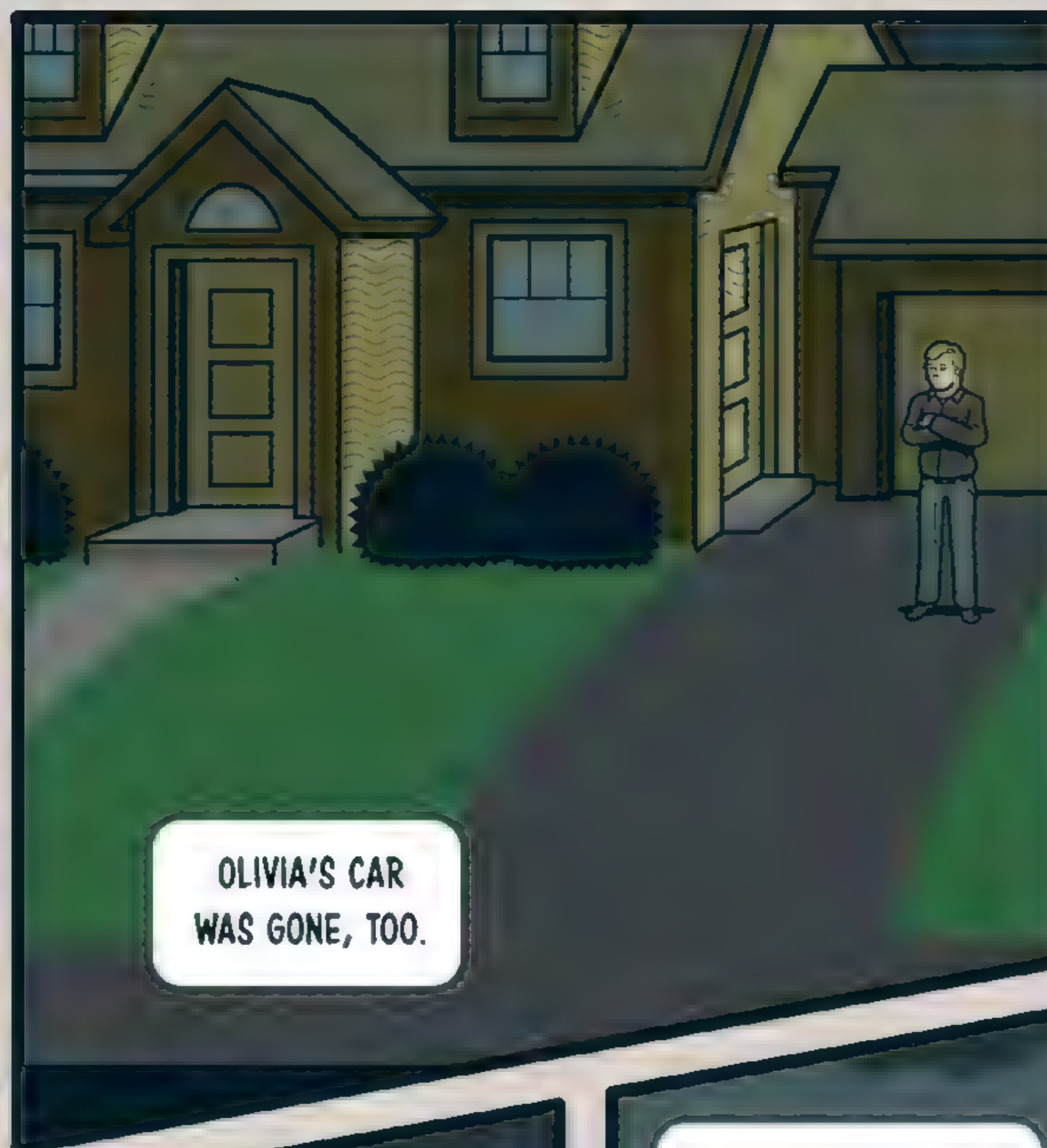
CARLA BEGAN HER SINGSONG INCANTATIONS AND THE CRYSTAL BALL BEGAN TO PULSE WITH LIGHT.

THE ROOM WENT DARK.

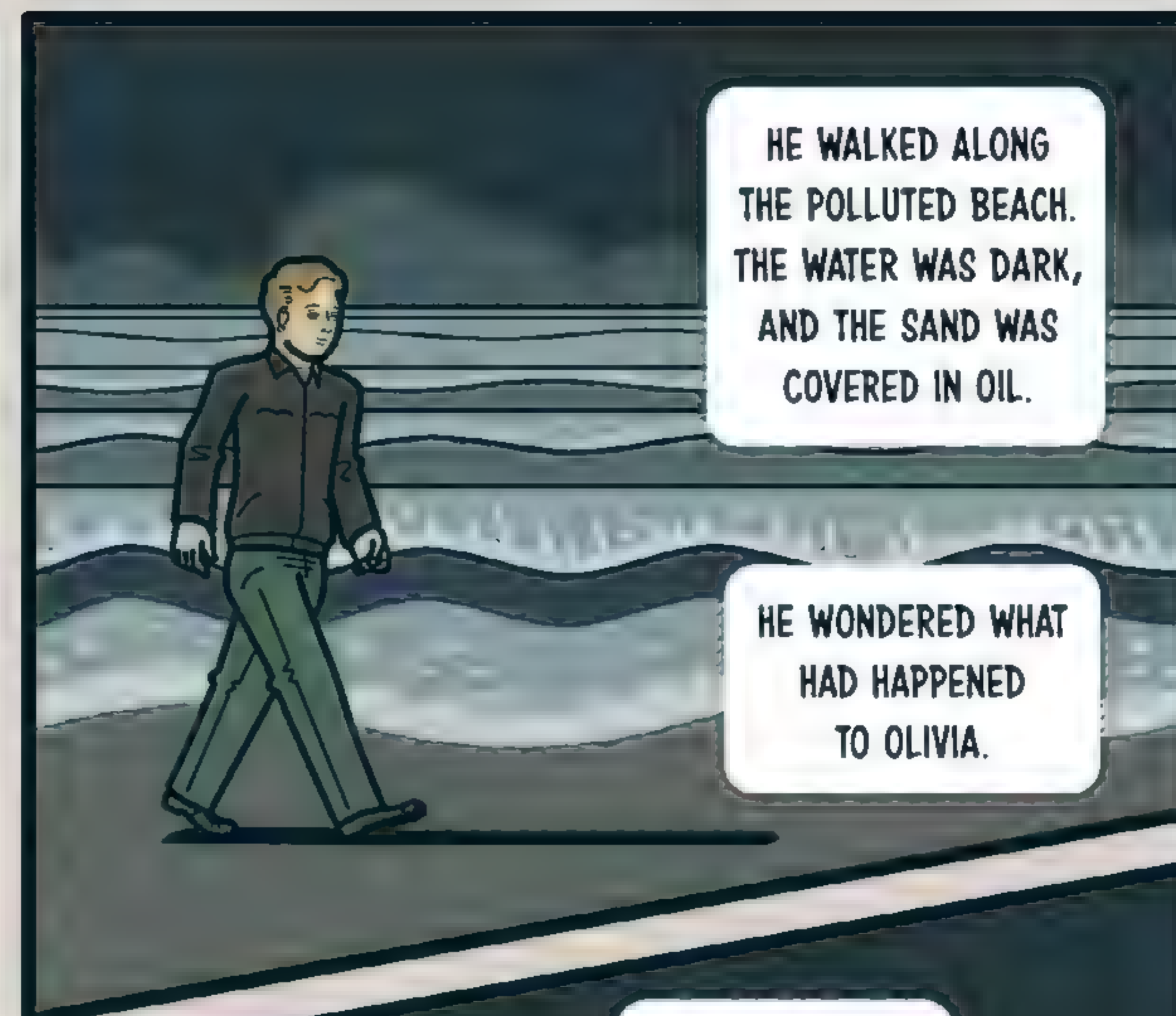




JIM BLINKED HIS EYES  
AND SLOWLY STOOD UP.  
HE WAS ALONE AT  
THE TABLE.



OLIVIA'S CAR  
WAS GONE, TOO.



HE WALKED ALONG  
THE POLLUTED BEACH.  
THE WATER WAS DARK,  
AND THE SAND WAS  
COVERED IN OIL.

HE WONDERED WHAT  
HAD HAPPENED  
TO OLIVIA.



A POLICE  
CRUISER  
ROLLED UP.

SIR, WE'RE GOING  
TO NEED TO SEE  
SOME IDENTIFICATION.



JIM TOOK OUT HIS  
WALLET AND HANDED  
OVER HIS LICENSE. HE  
WATCHED WHILE THE  
OFFICER EXAMINED IT.

SIR, YOU NEED TO  
COME WITH US.



BURGESS WAS SITTING IN THE BACK SEAT.  
HE HAD POWDER BURNS ON HIS SUIT AND  
TWO RAGGED HOLES IN HIS CHEST.

I'M WORKING FOR  
THE A.L.P.D. NOW.



APPARENTLY, YOU DIDN'T  
TAKE CAROL'S OUTCOME  
TO HEART.



THIS IS WHERE SHE ENDED UP,  
AND IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL,  
YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF IN THE  
SAME POSITION.



OLIVIA IS HERE WITH US AND SHE'S SAFE FOR NOW,  
BUT THERE'S TOO MUCH RIDING ON THIS TO LET  
YOU SCREW IT UP.

YOU REALLY DON'T  
WANT TO BE ON  
HADES' BAD SIDE...



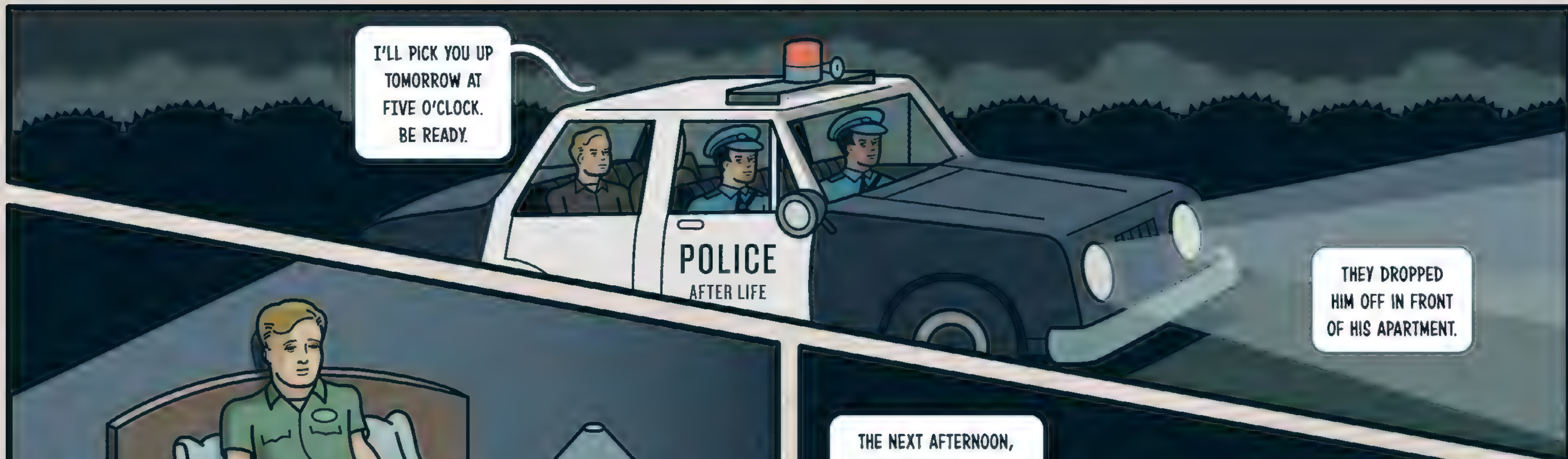
ON A HILL, THE  
HOLLYWOOD SIGN  
GLOWED RED  
IN THE NIGHT.

**HOLLYWOOD**

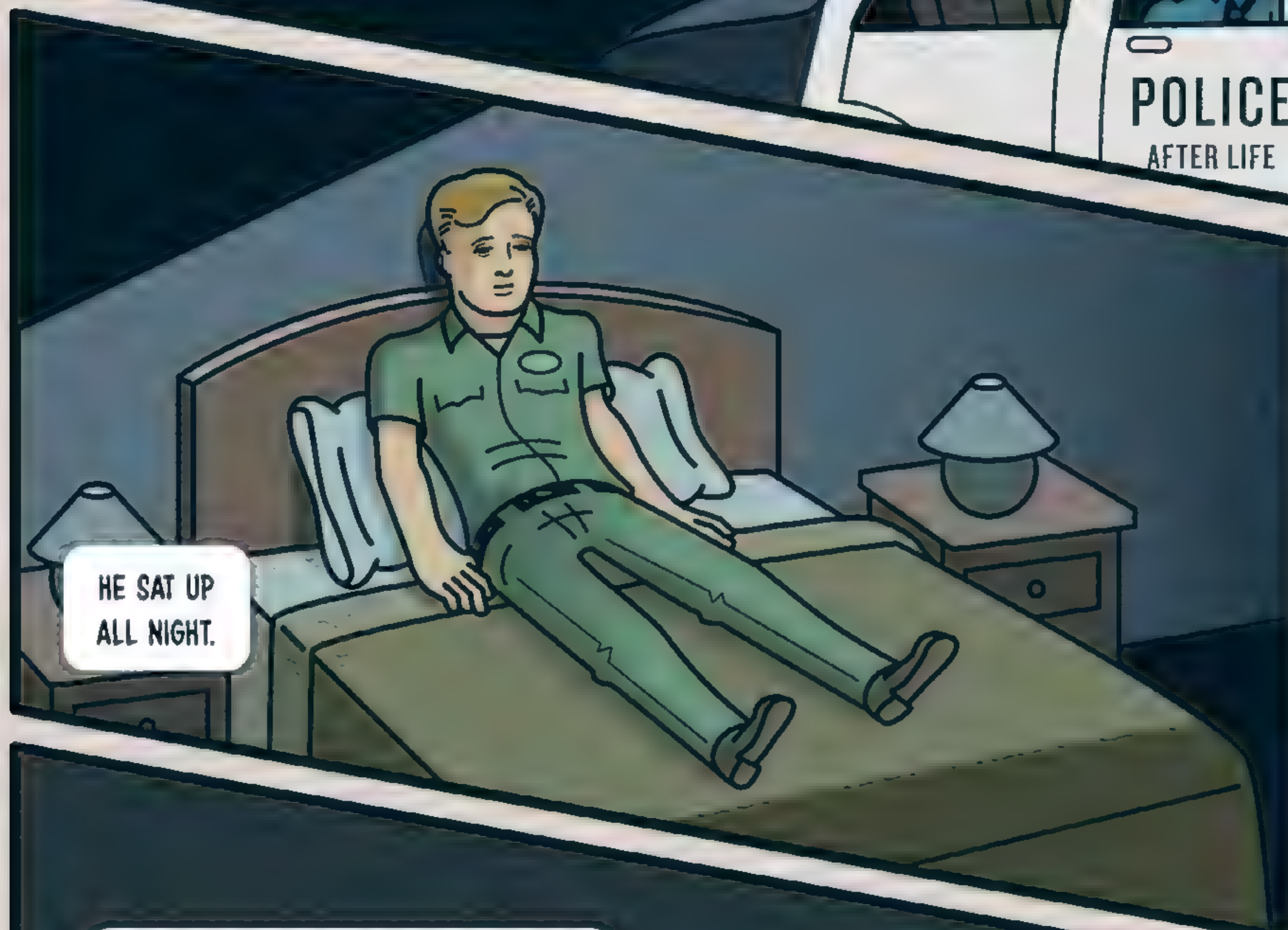


I WANT TO CONTINUE OUR ARRANGEMENT,  
CONFIDENTIALLY, OF COURSE.  
I'M GOING TO SEND YOU BACK TO THE  
LIVING WORLD, AND YOU'LL BRING  
SHADES OVER. THERE'S A WARRANT  
FOR YOUR ARREST, SO YOU'LL BE KEPT  
IN SOLITARY, UNDER CONSTANT WATCH.  
I'LL TAKE YOU OUT AS NEEDED.  
IF YOU END UP GETTING PINCHED,  
IT'S INTO A JAR FOR YOU.

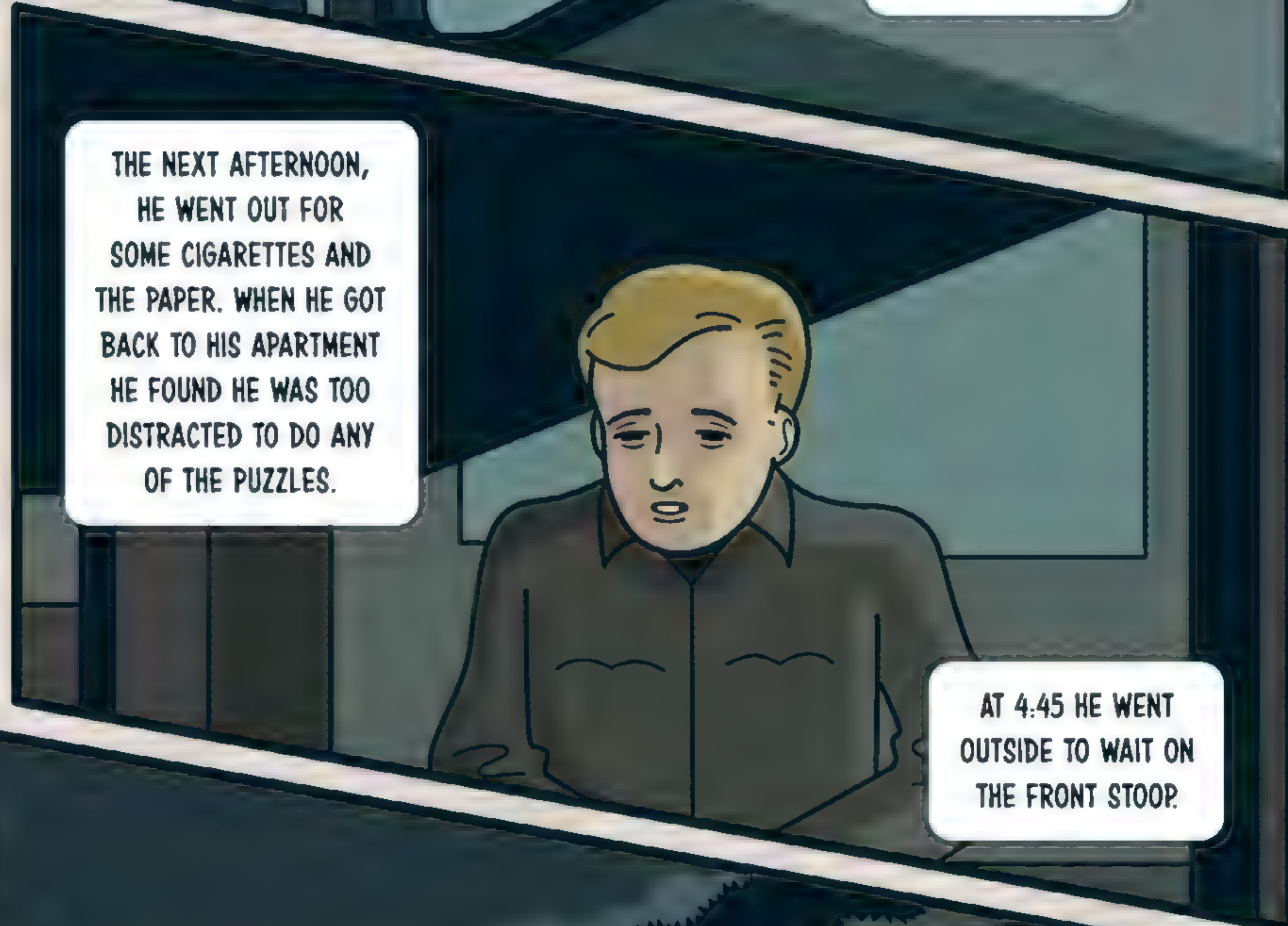




THEY DROPPED HIM OFF IN FRONT OF HIS APARTMENT.



THE NEXT AFTERNOON, HE WENT OUT FOR SOME CIGARETTES AND THE PAPER. WHEN HE GOT BACK TO HIS APARTMENT HE FOUND HE WAS TOO DISTRACTED TO DO ANY OF THE PUZZLES.



BURGESS PULLED UP PROMPTLY AT FIVE, IN AN UNMARKED FOUR-DOOR BUICK. JIM GOT IN, AND THEY DROVE OFF.

CARLA'S IN A NEW PLACE...

WHAT ABOUT OLIVIA?

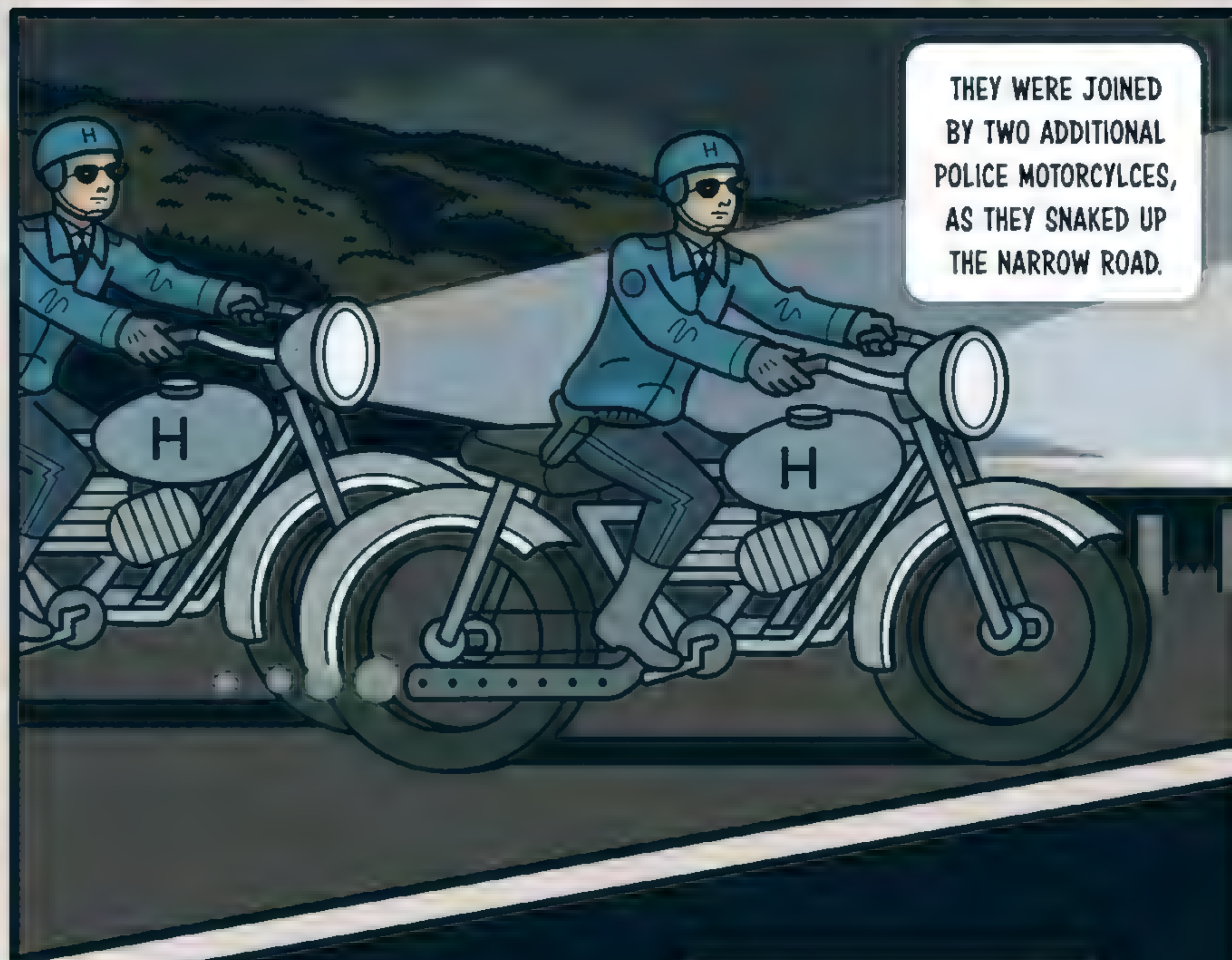
YEAH, THEY'RE BOTH THERE.





LOOKS LIKE WE'RE  
GOING ON AN  
UNEXPECTED DRIVE.

TWO MOTORCYCLE COPS  
PULLED UP ON EITHER  
SIDE OF THE CAR. THEY  
MOTIONED FOR BURGESS  
TO FOLLOW THEM.

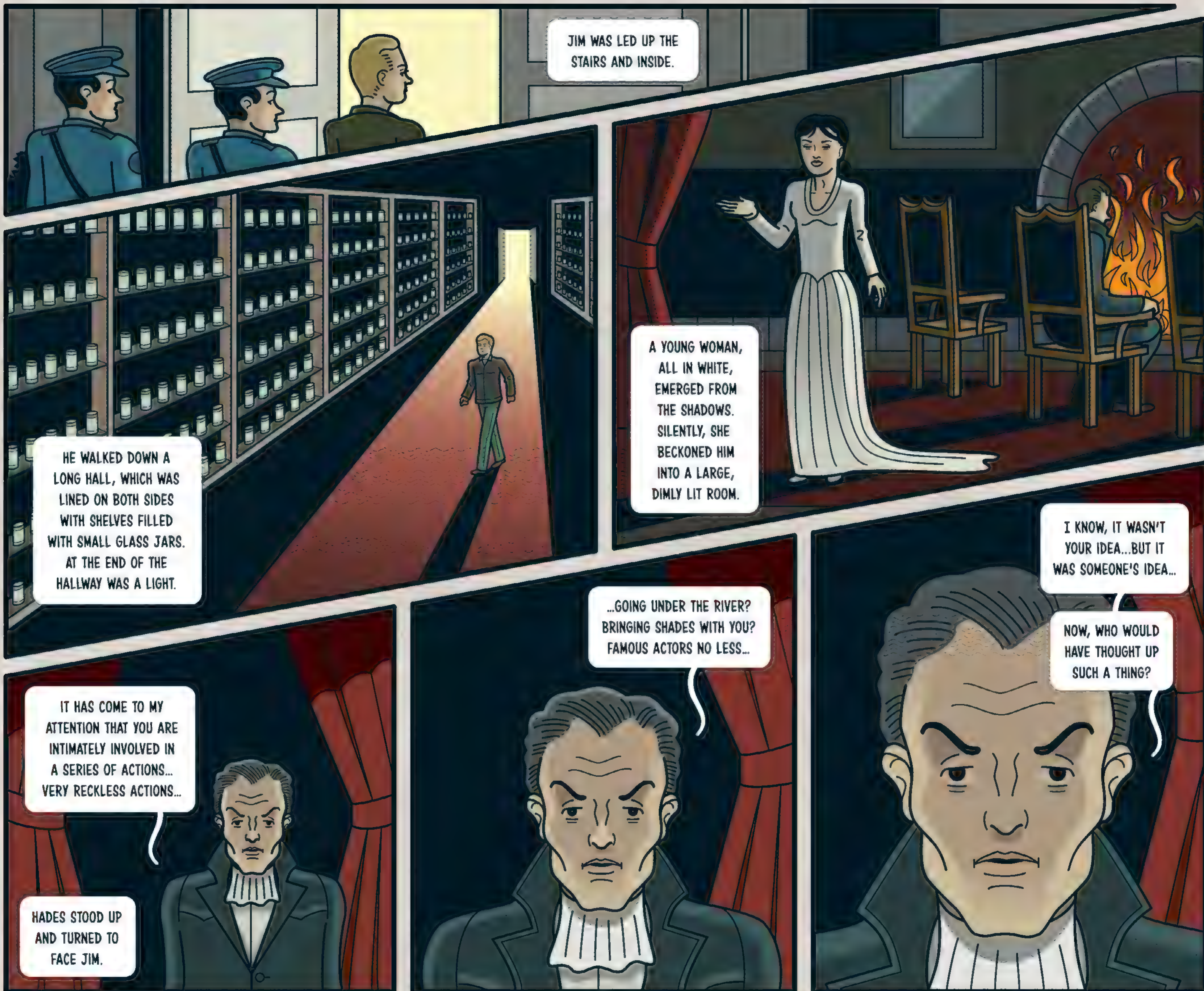


THEY WERE JOINED  
BY TWO ADDITIONAL  
POLICE MOTORCYCLES,  
AS THEY SNAKED UP  
THE NARROW ROAD.

THEY WERE DIRECTED TO PARK  
IN FRONT OF A LARGE BUILDING.  
BURGESS WAS YANKED OUT OF  
THE CAR AND ESCORTED AWAY.







JIM WAS LED UP THE STAIRS AND INSIDE.

HE WALKED DOWN A LONG HALL, WHICH WAS LINED ON BOTH SIDES WITH SHELVES FILLED WITH SMALL GLASS JARS. AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY WAS A LIGHT.

A YOUNG WOMAN, ALL IN WHITE, EMERGED FROM THE SHADOWS. SILENTLY, SHE BECKONED HIM INTO A LARGE, DIMLY LIT ROOM.

IT HAS COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT YOU ARE INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN A SERIES OF ACTIONS... VERY RECKLESS ACTIONS...

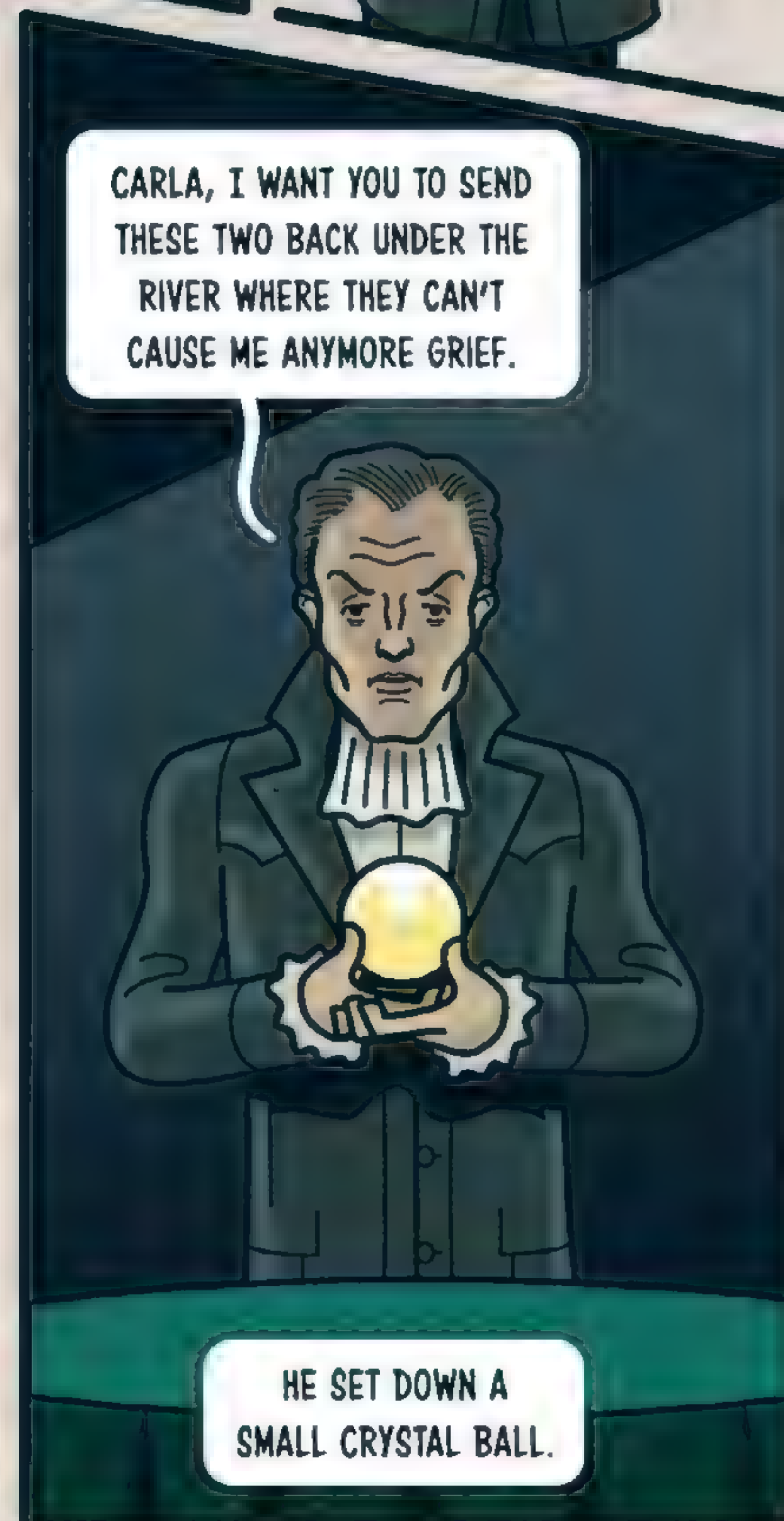
HADES STOOD UP AND TURNED TO FACE JIM.

...GOING UNDER THE RIVER? BRINGING SHADES WITH YOU? FAMOUS ACTORS NO LESS...

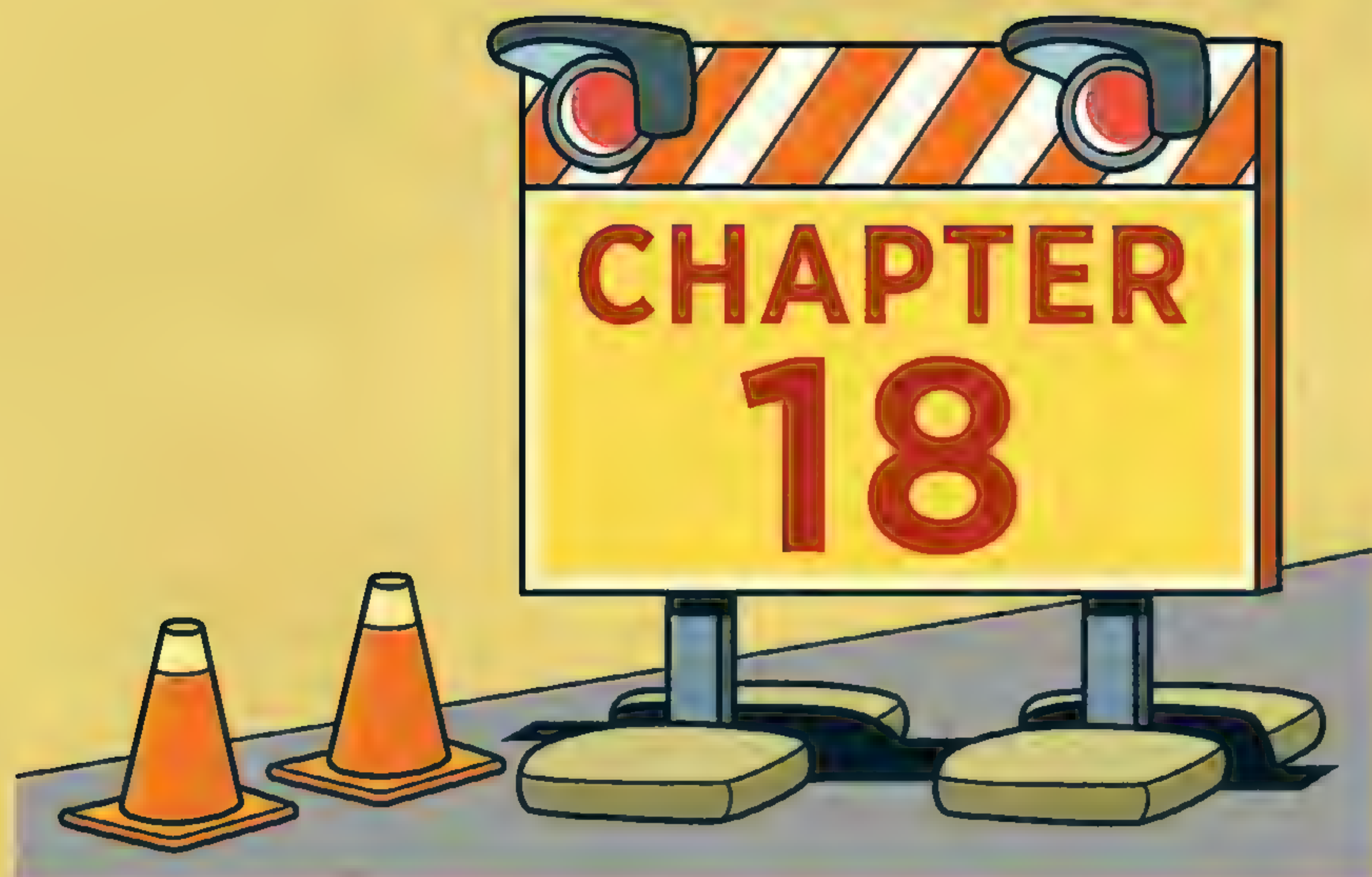
I KNOW, IT WASN'T YOUR IDEA...BUT IT WAS SOMEONE'S IDEA...

NOW, WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT UP SUCH A THING?





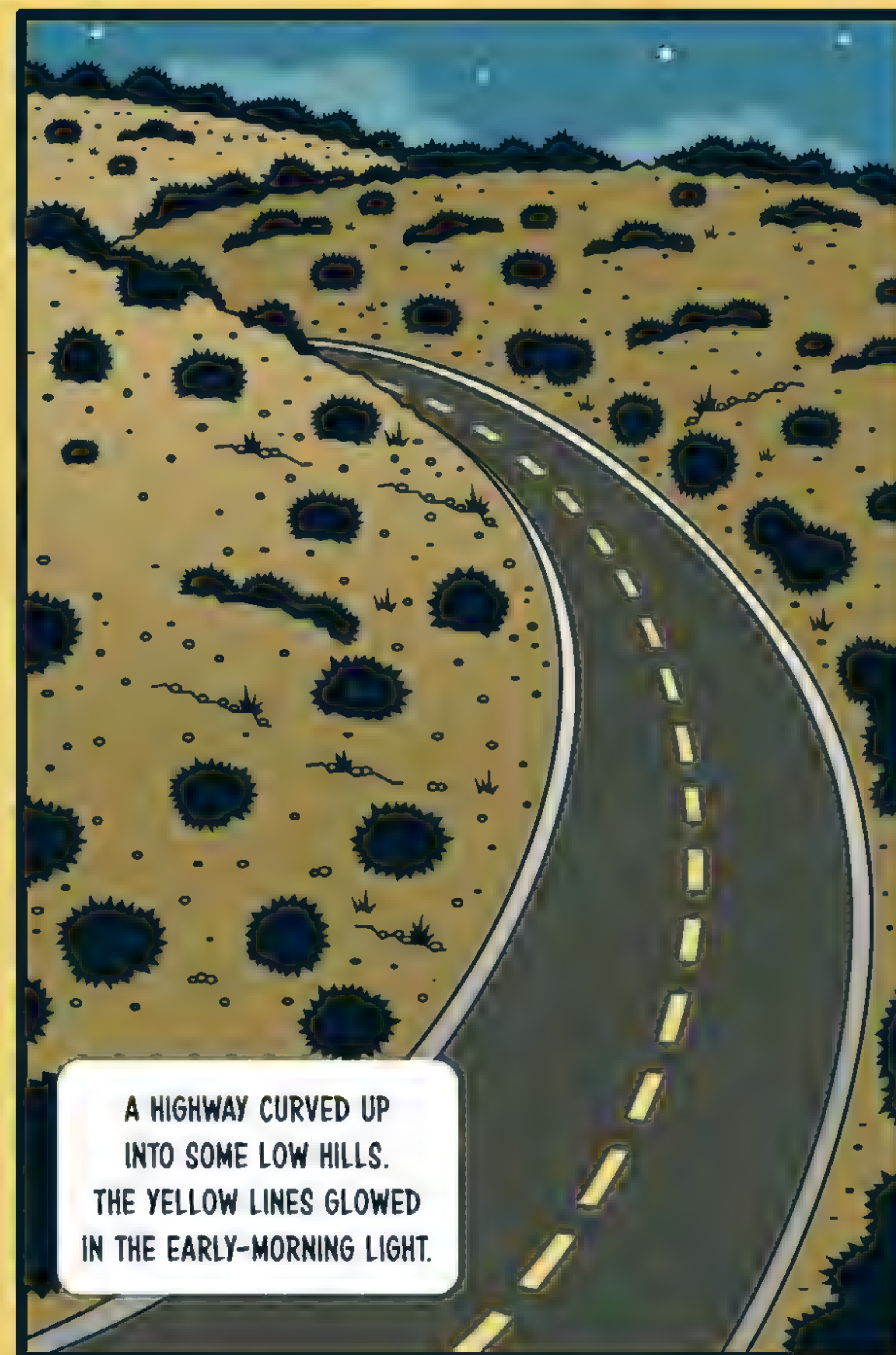
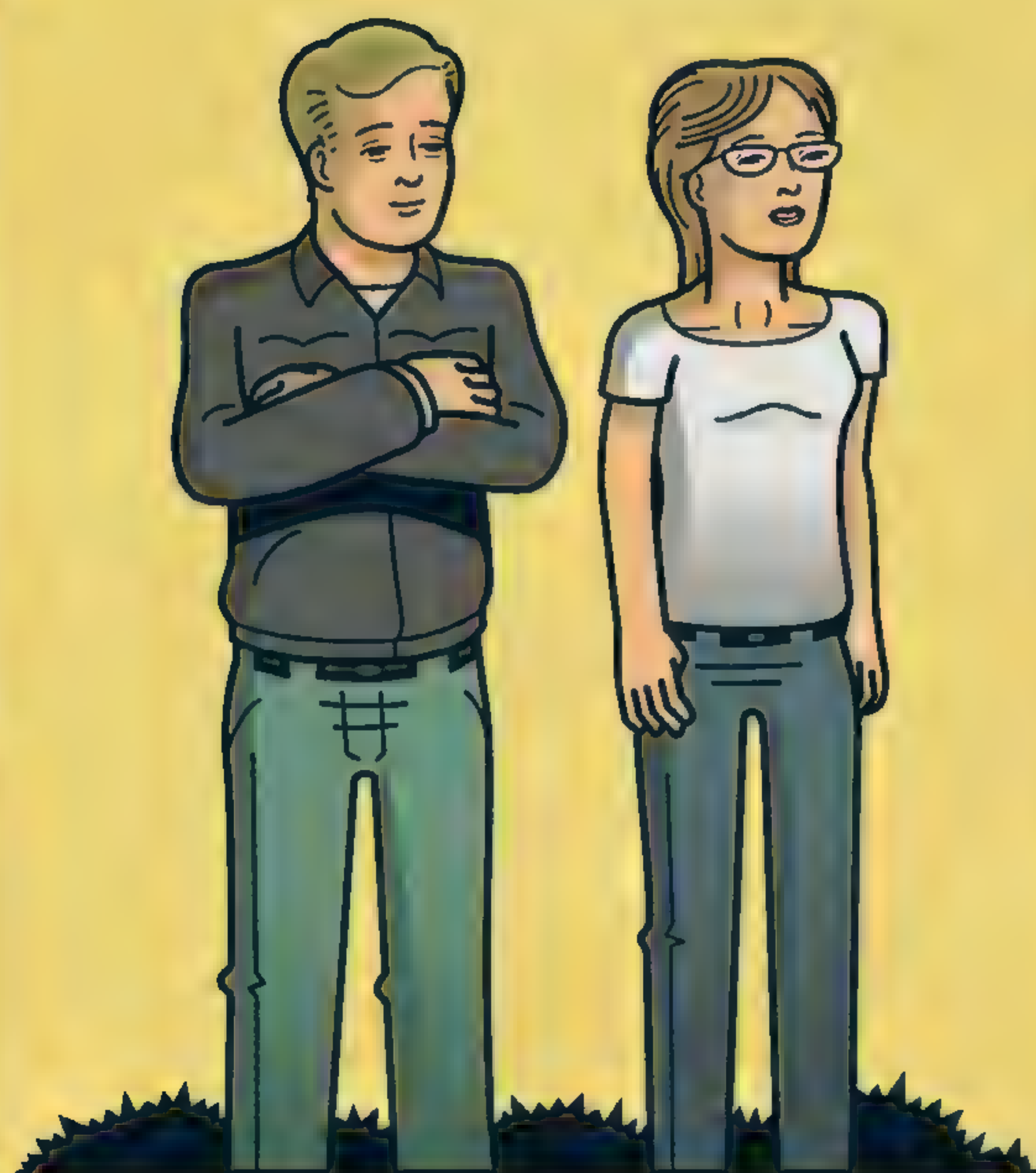




JIM OPENED HIS EYES. HE AND CARLA WERE LYING IN A DRAINAGE PIPE ON THE EDGE OF A CULVERT.

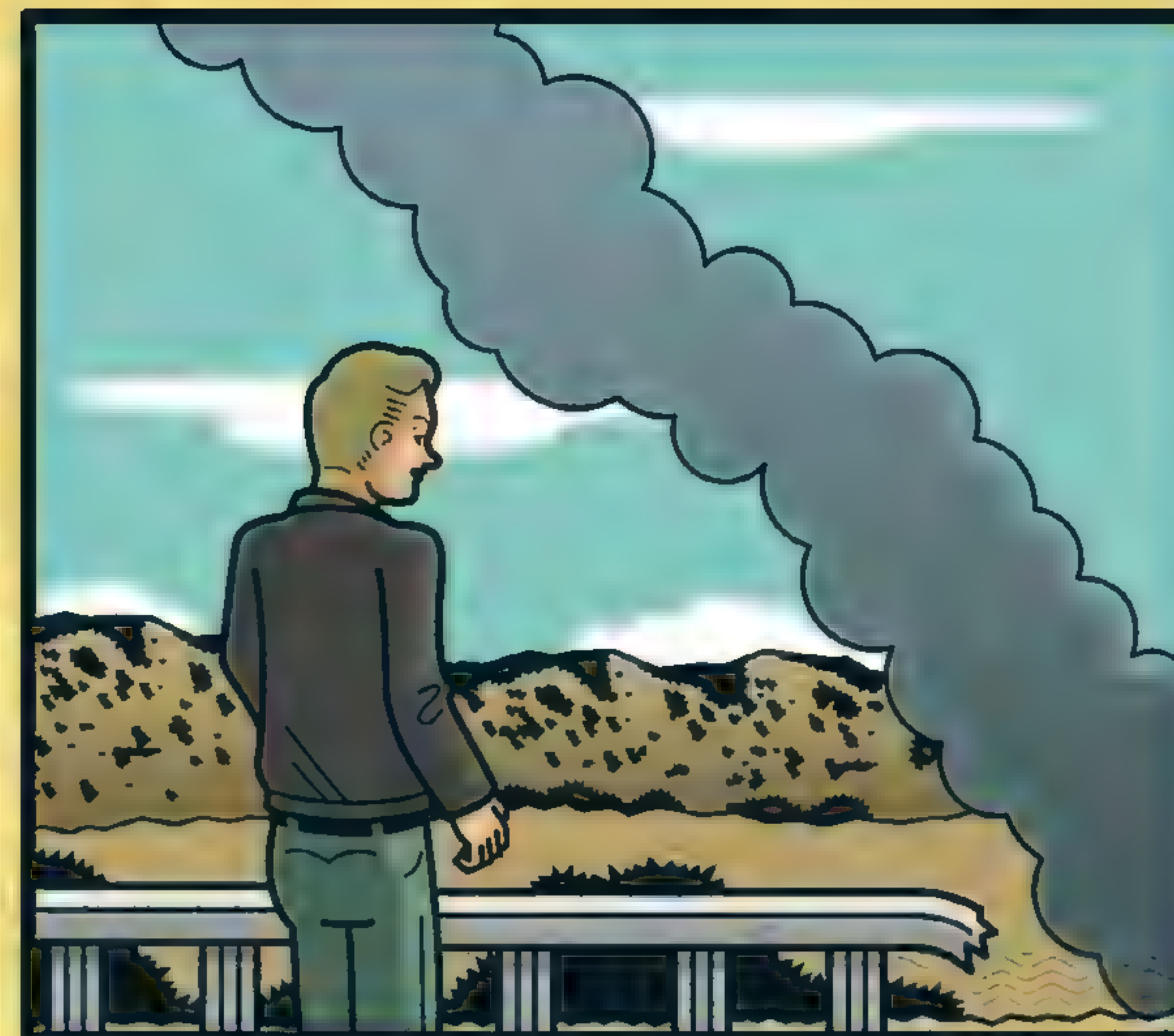
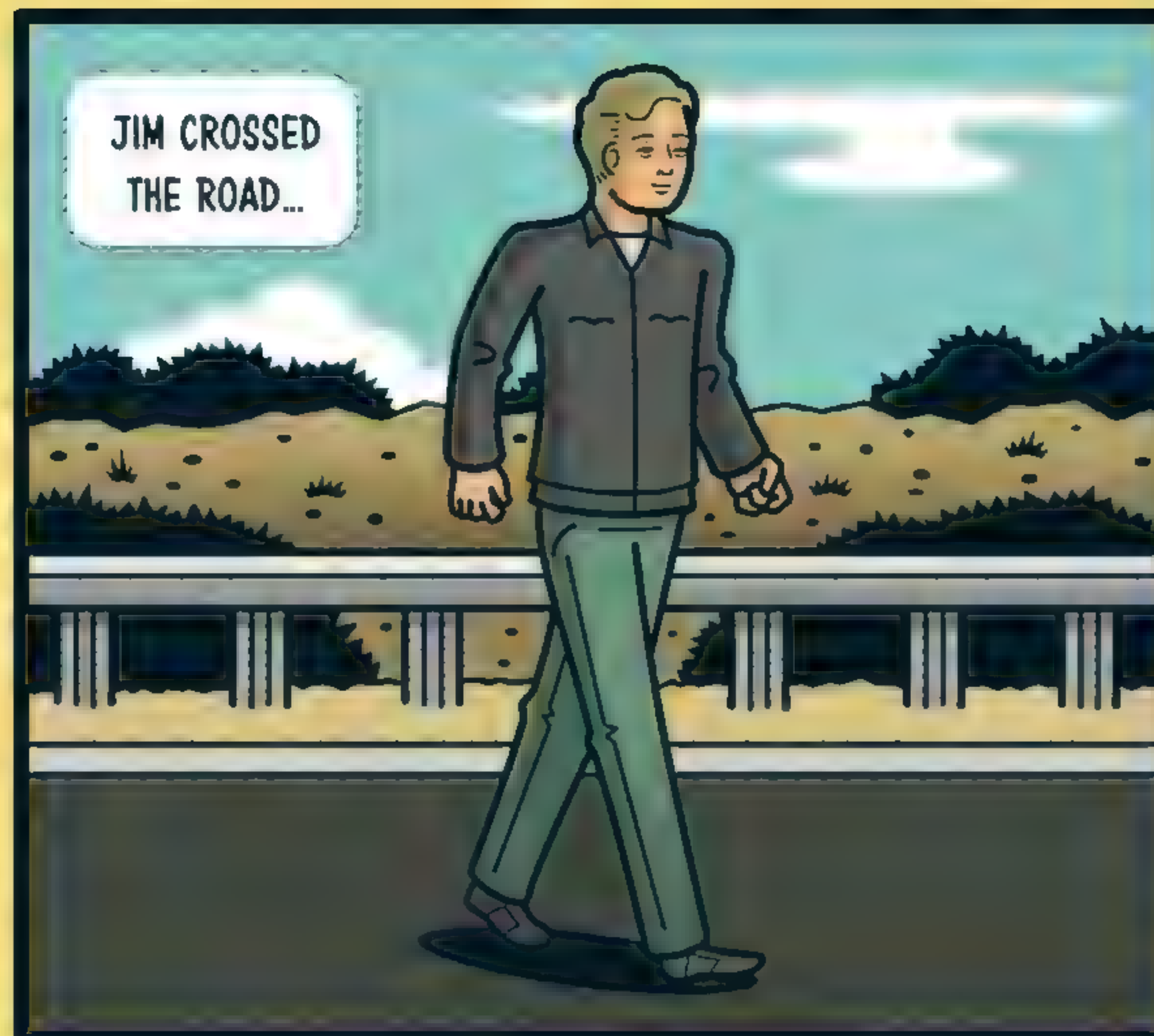
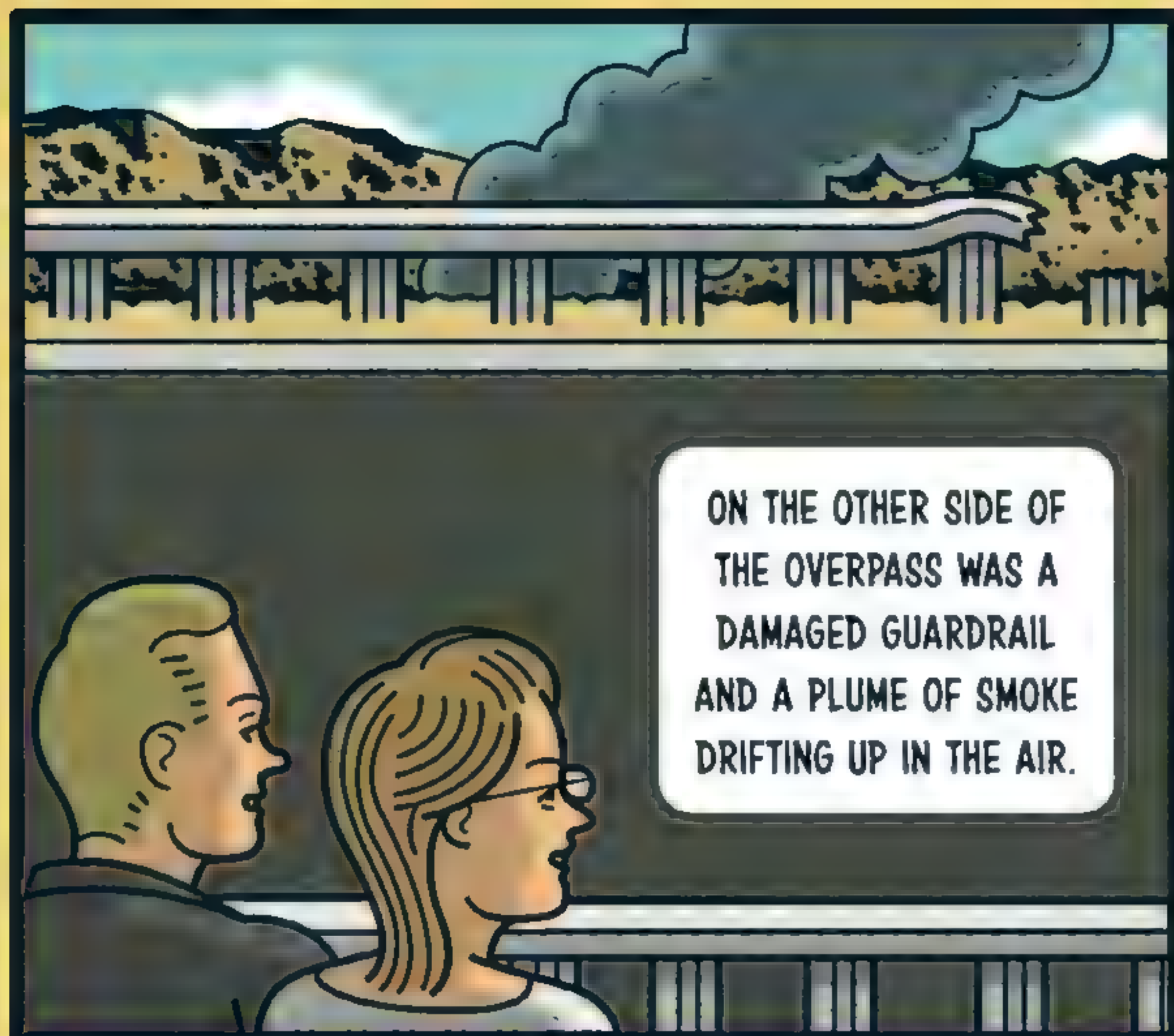


THE SUN WAS STARTING TO COME UP, AND THEY COULD DIMLY MAKE OUT THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE OF MESQUITE AND SCRUB GRASS SPREAD OUT IN FRONT OF THEM.

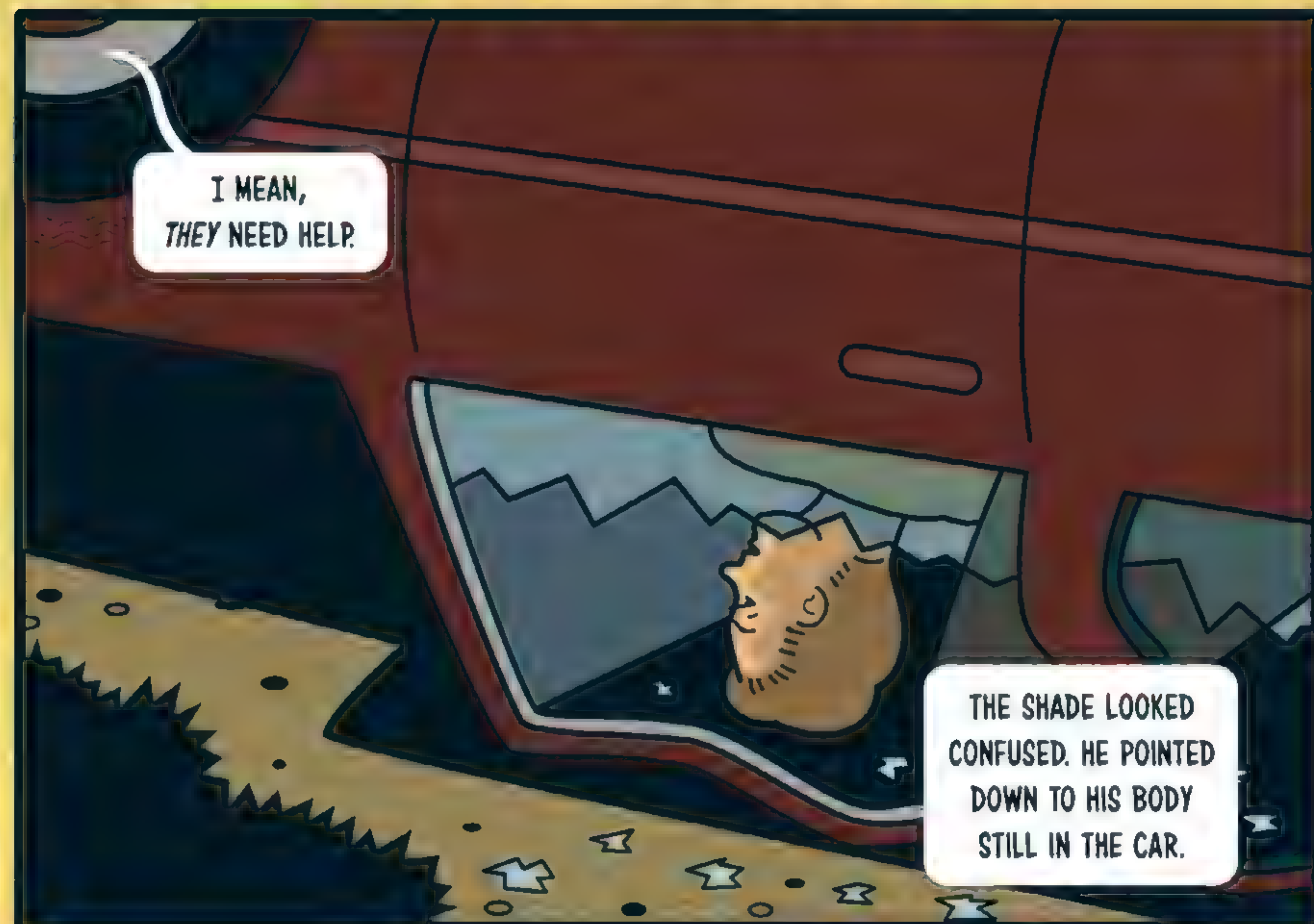
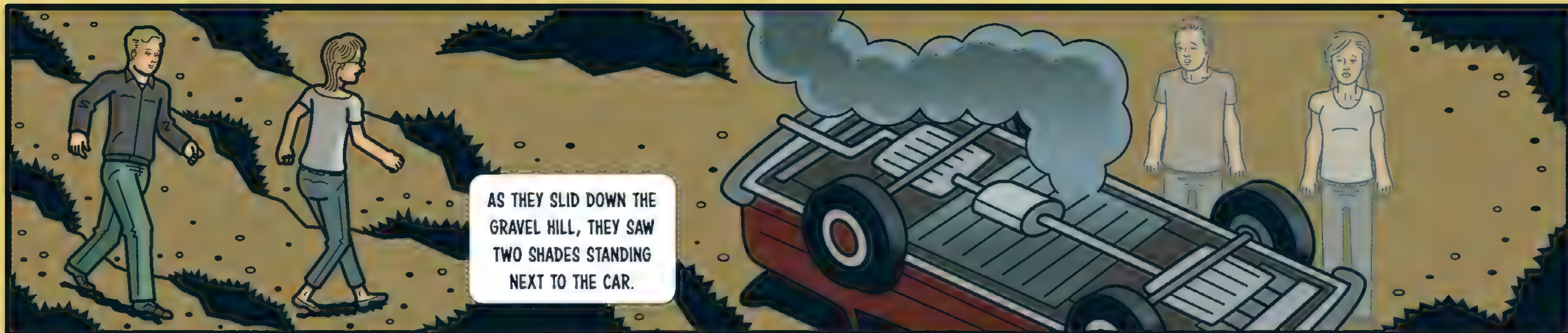


A HIGHWAY CURVED UP INTO SOME LOW HILLS. THE YELLOW LINES GLOWED IN THE EARLY-MORNING LIGHT.

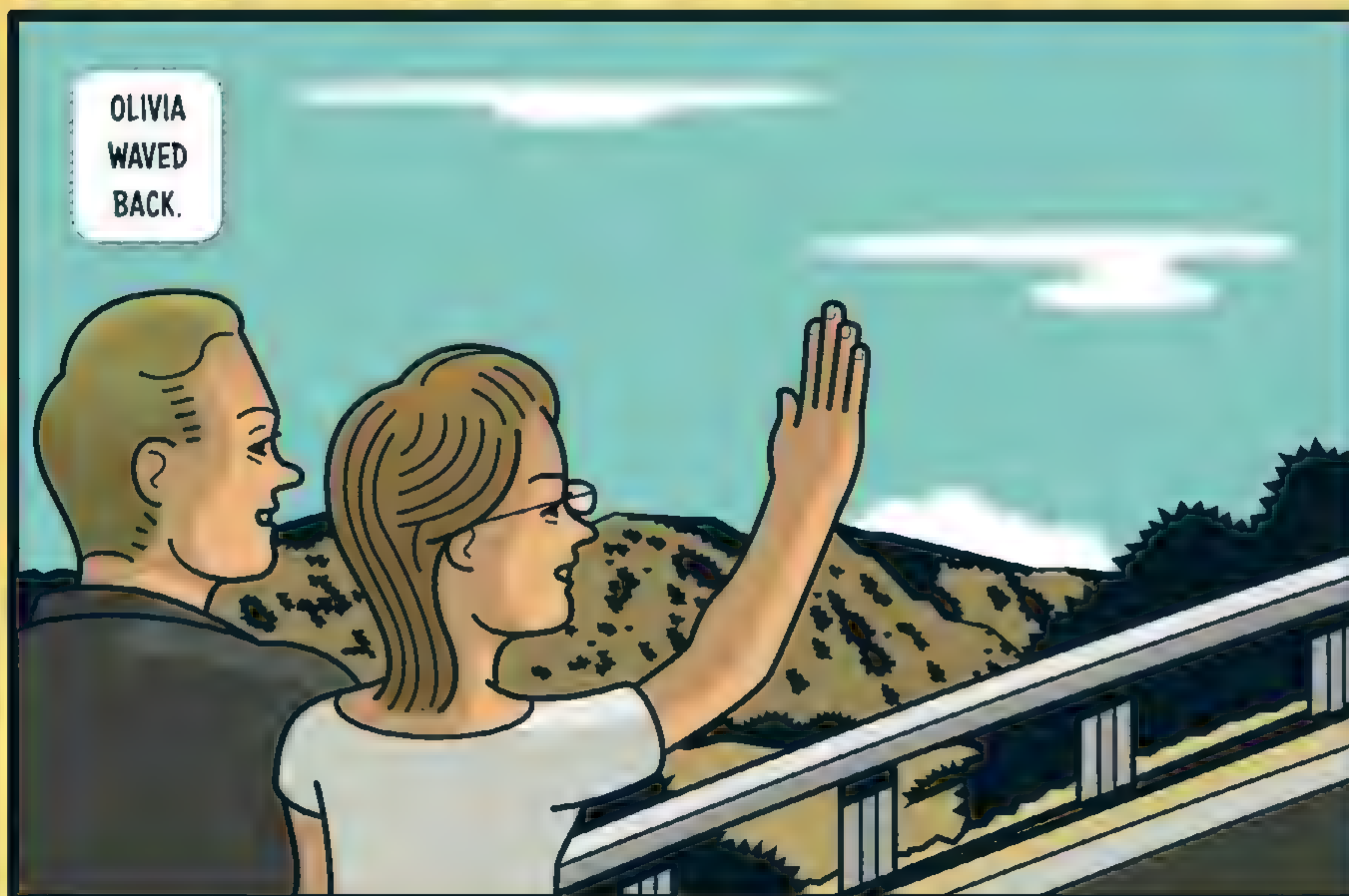
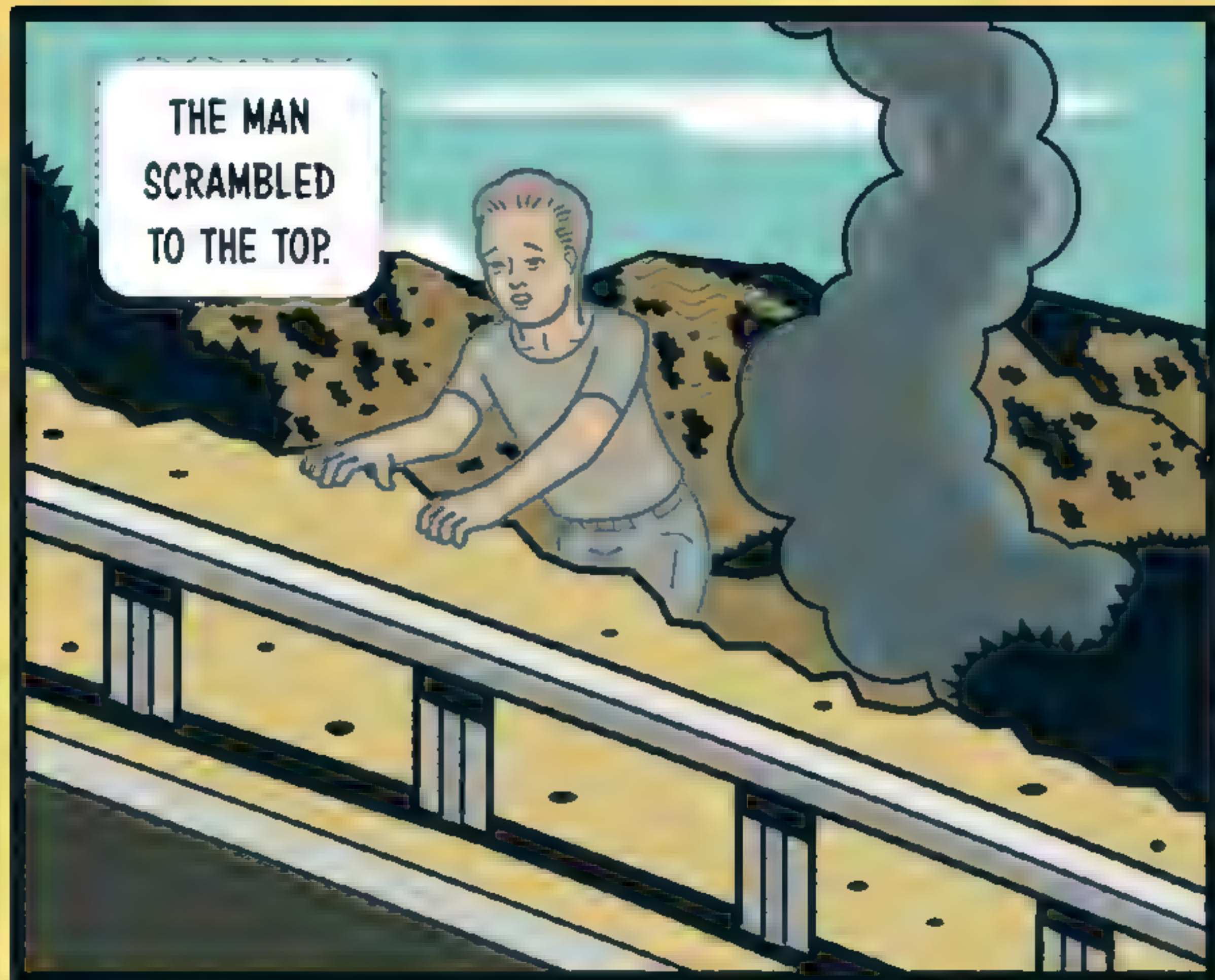




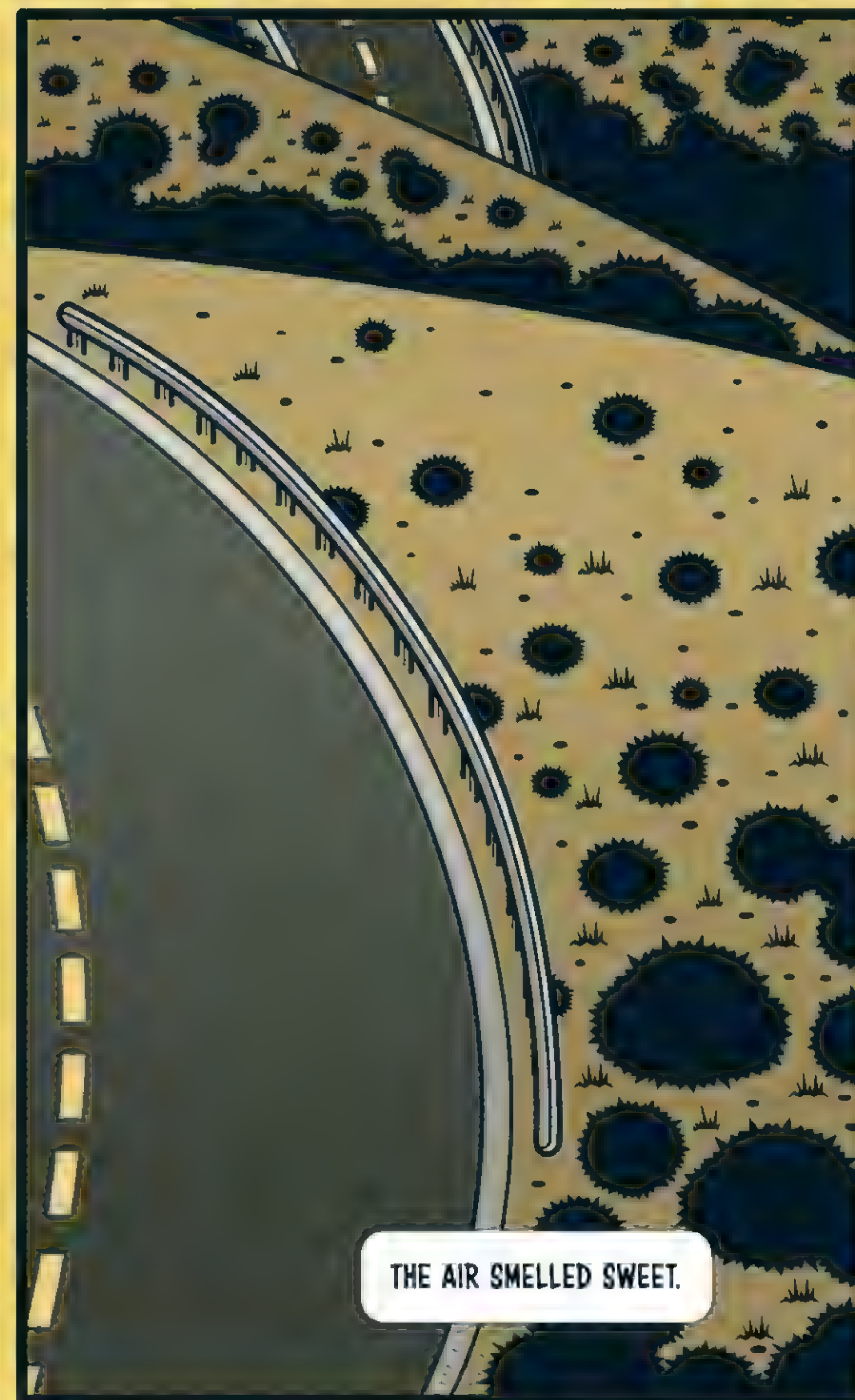
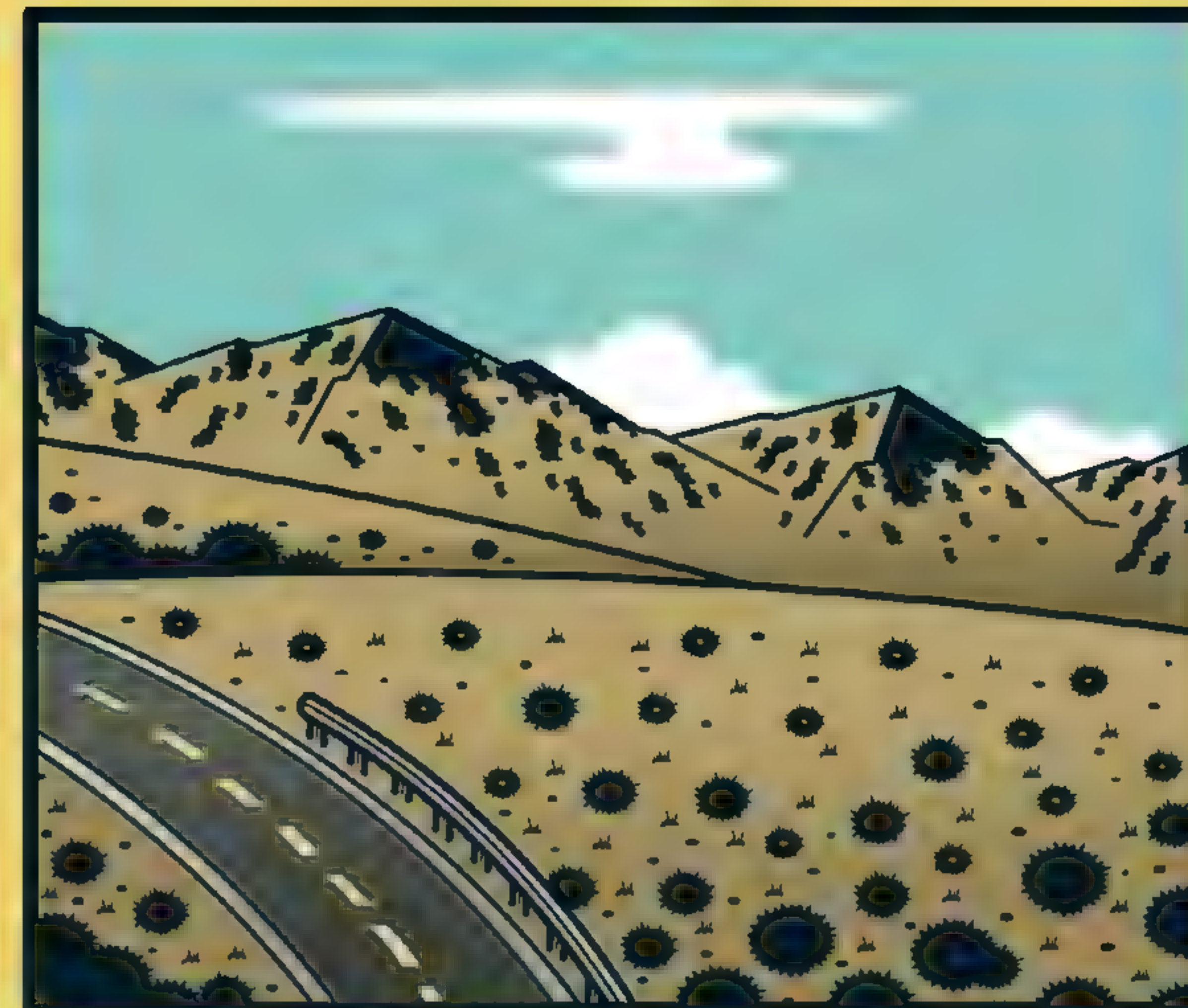
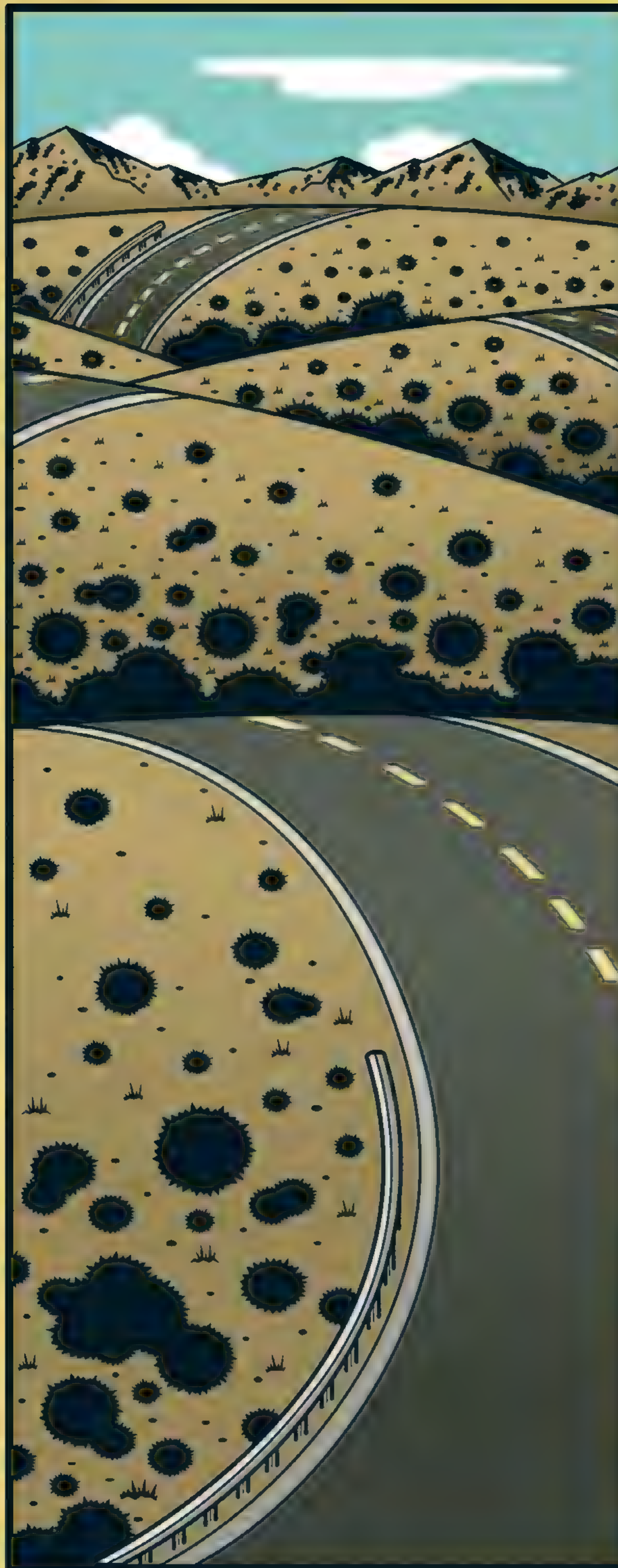
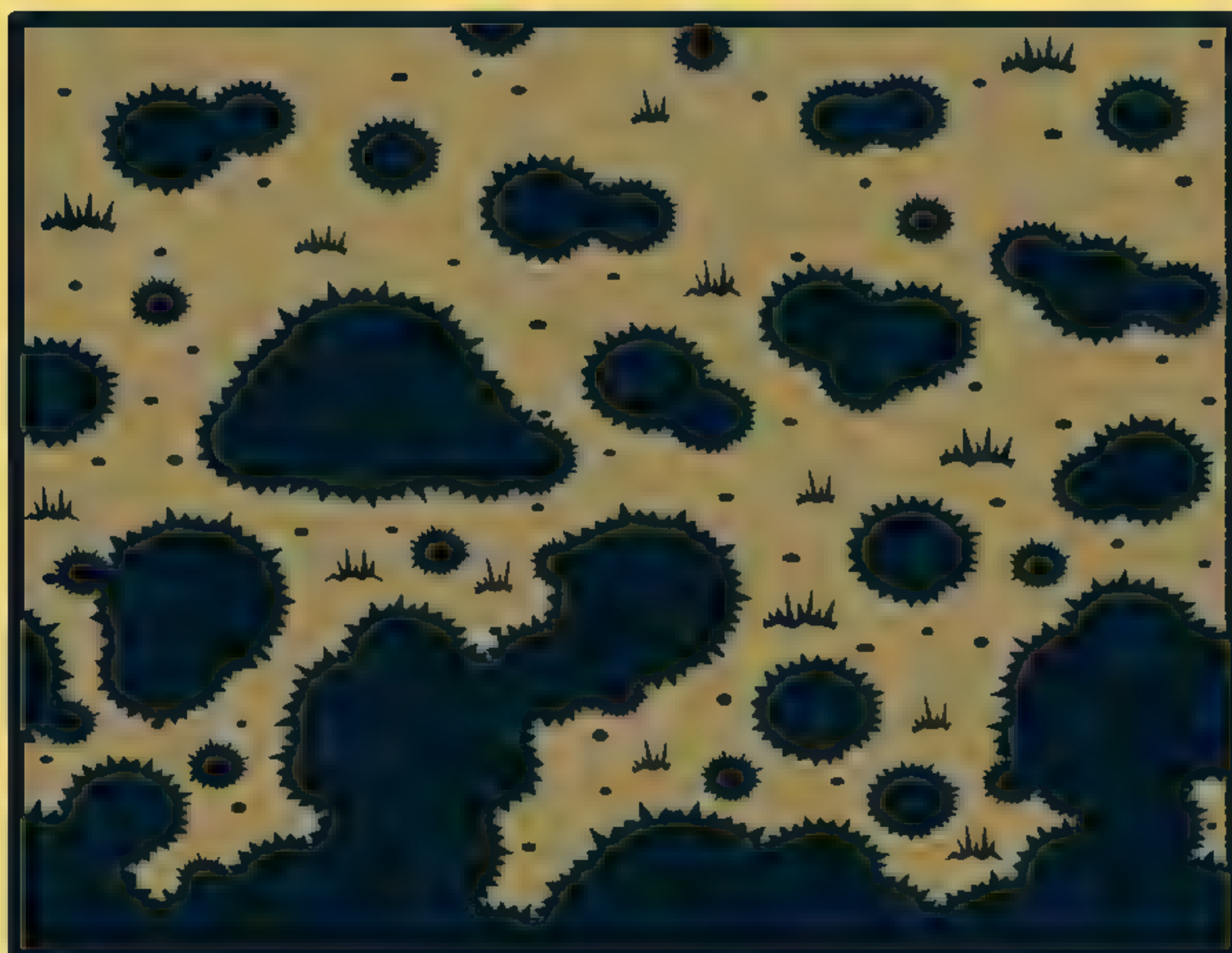
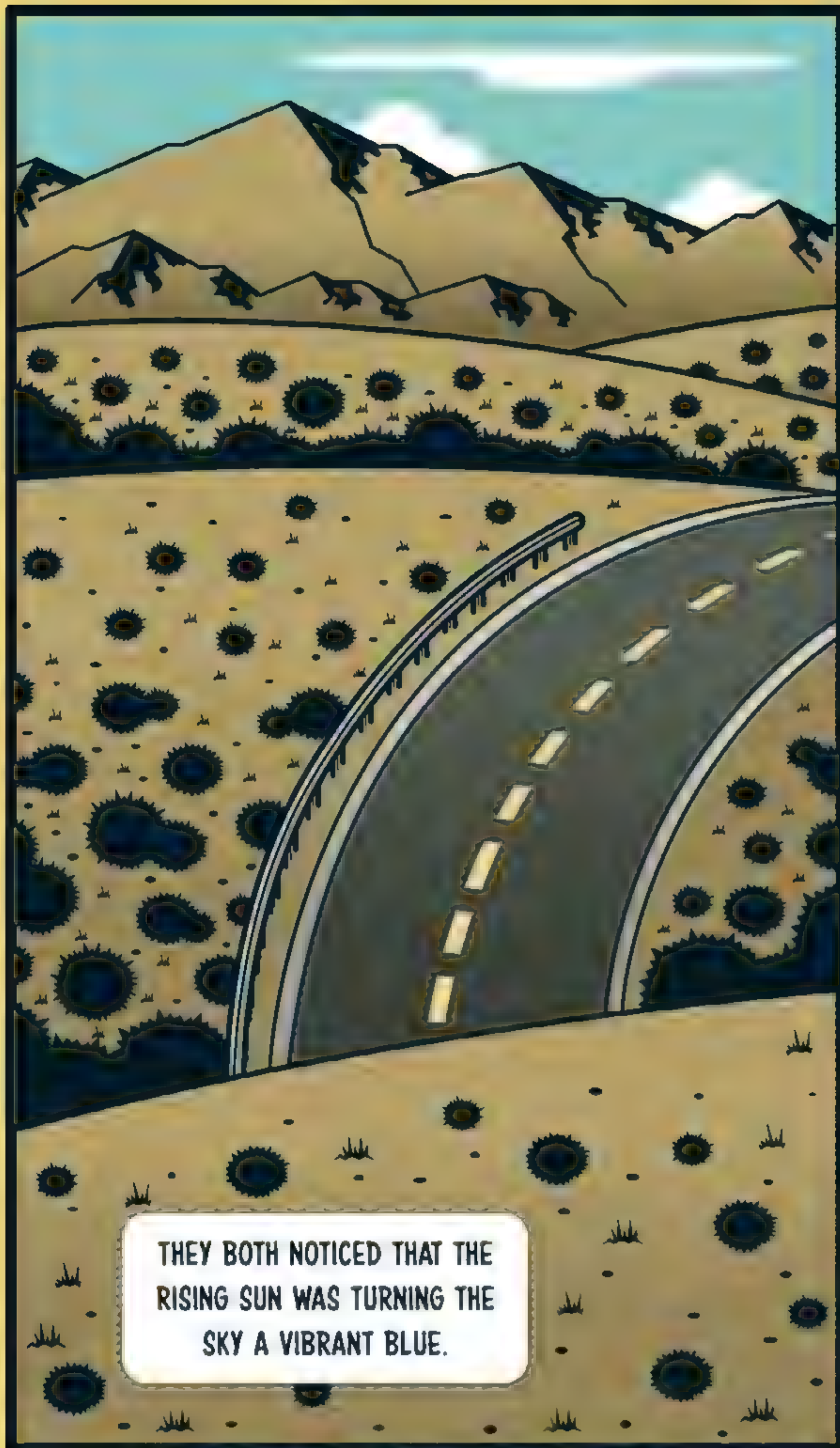














# THE LONG BLACK VEIL

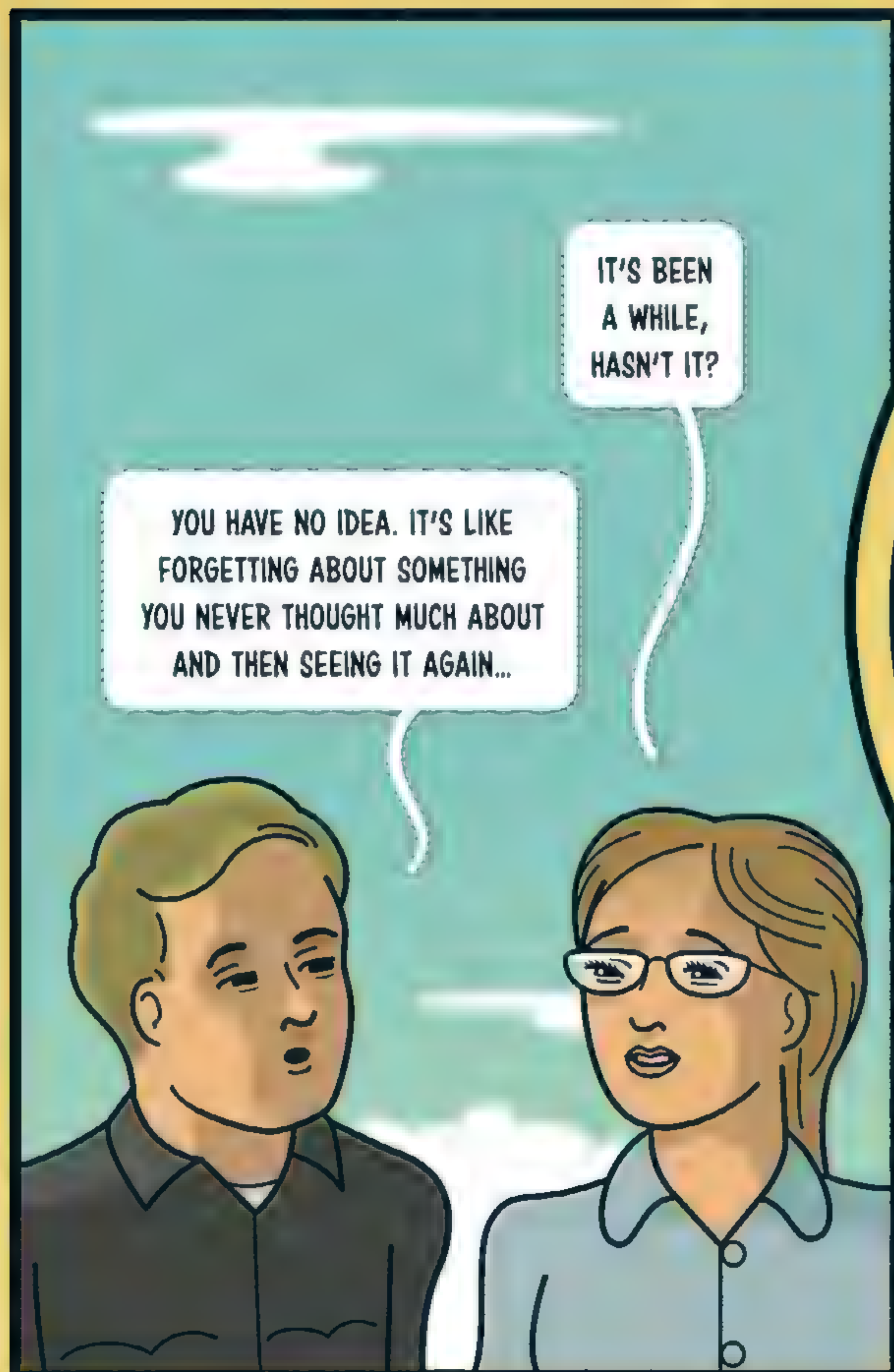




# CHAPTER



JIM AND OLIVIA WALKED ALONG WITHOUT TALKING. SHE'D FOUND A COAT LEFT BEHIND BY THE SHADE AND PULLED IT ON. IT WAS A CHILLY MORNING.



IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT?

YOU HAVE NO IDEA. IT'S LIKE FORGETTING ABOUT SOMETHING YOU NEVER THOUGHT MUCH ABOUT AND THEN SEEING IT AGAIN...



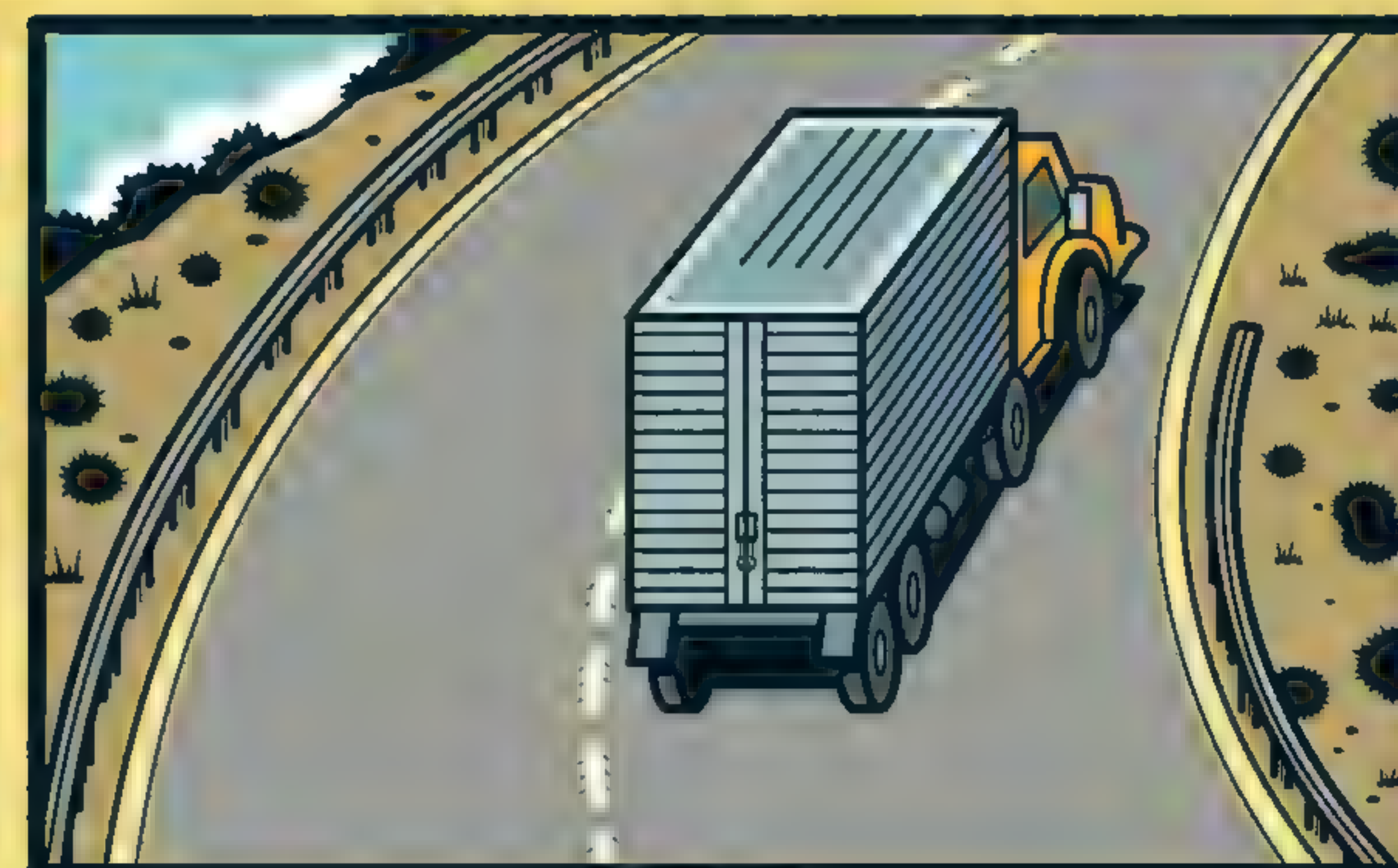
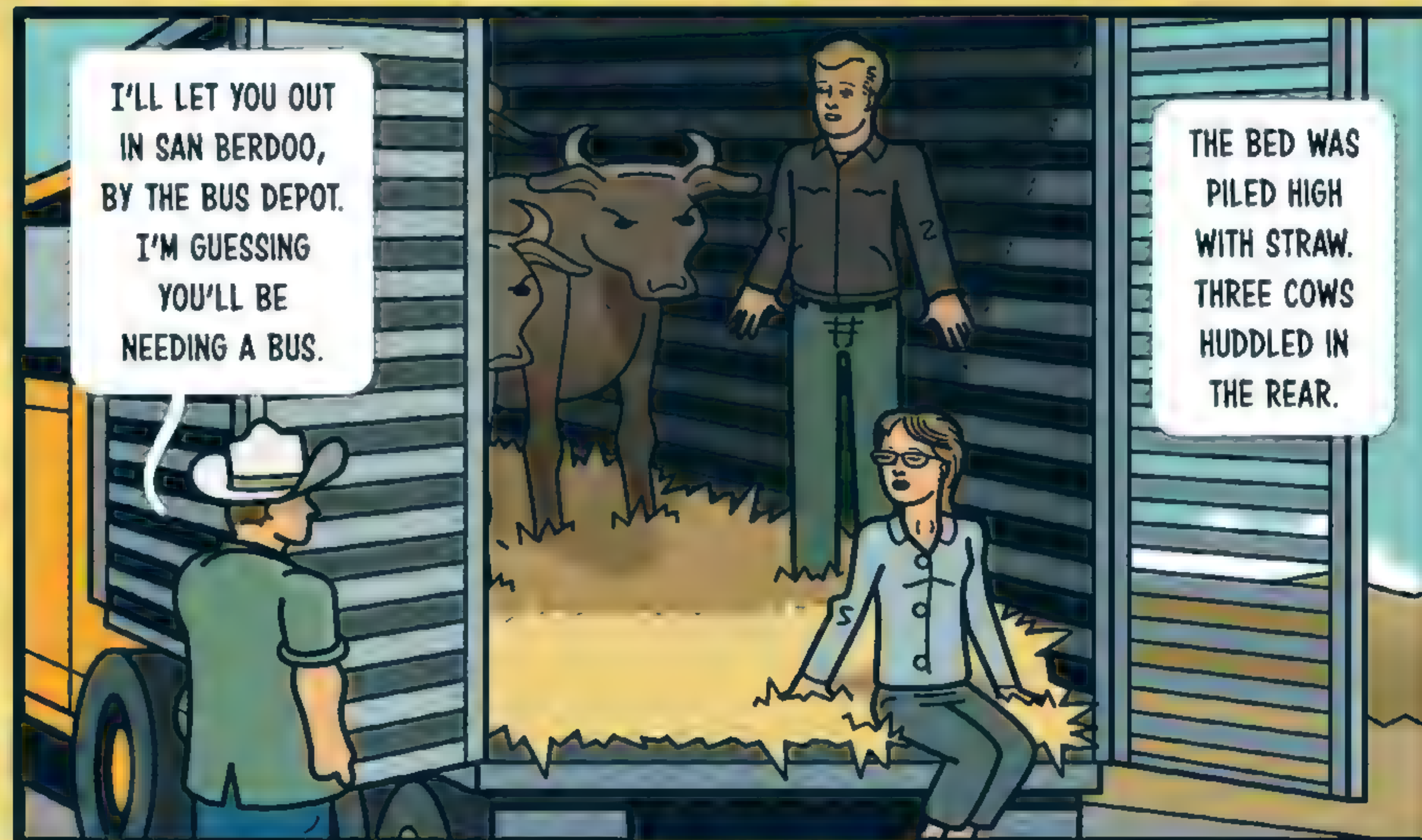
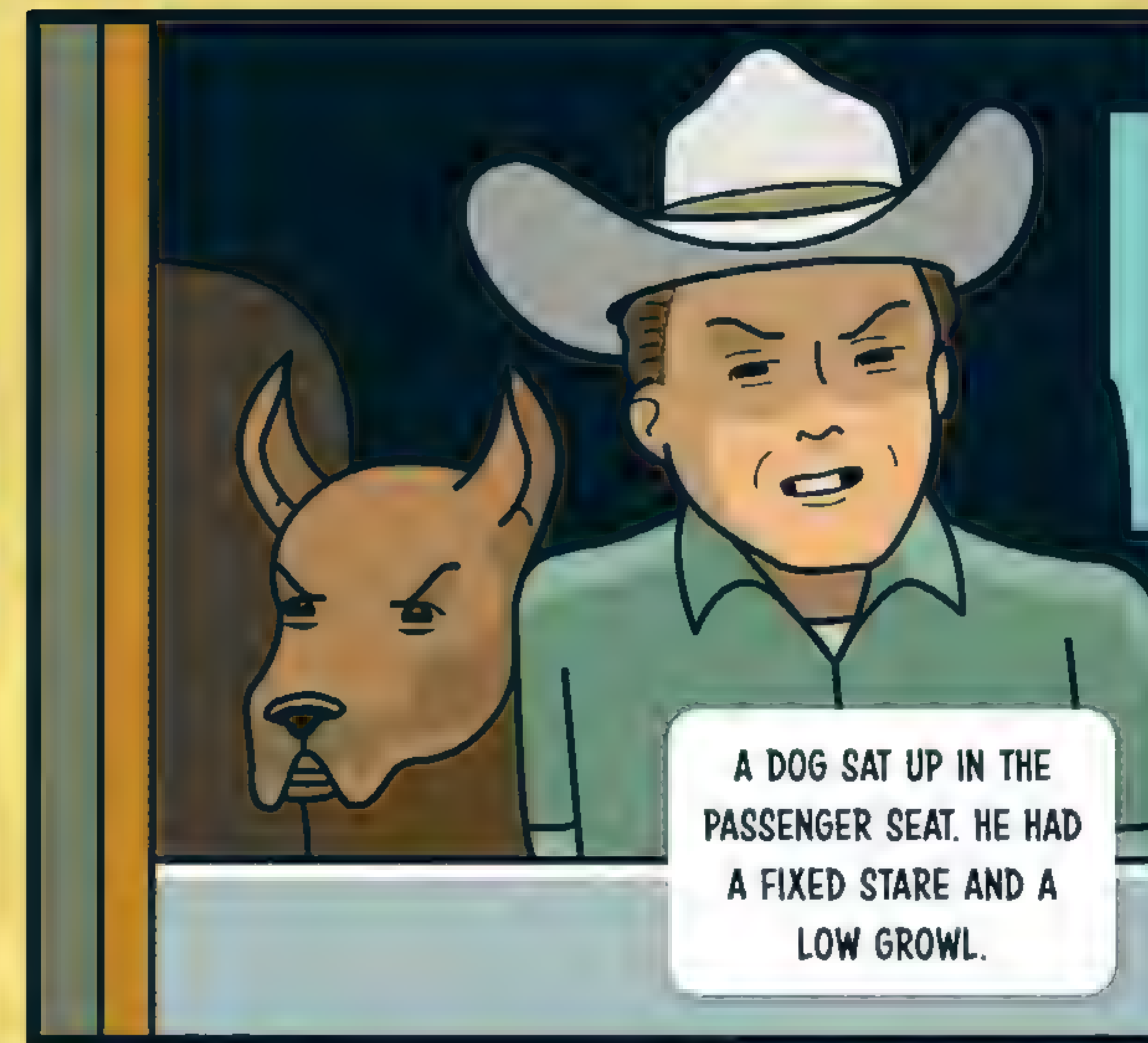
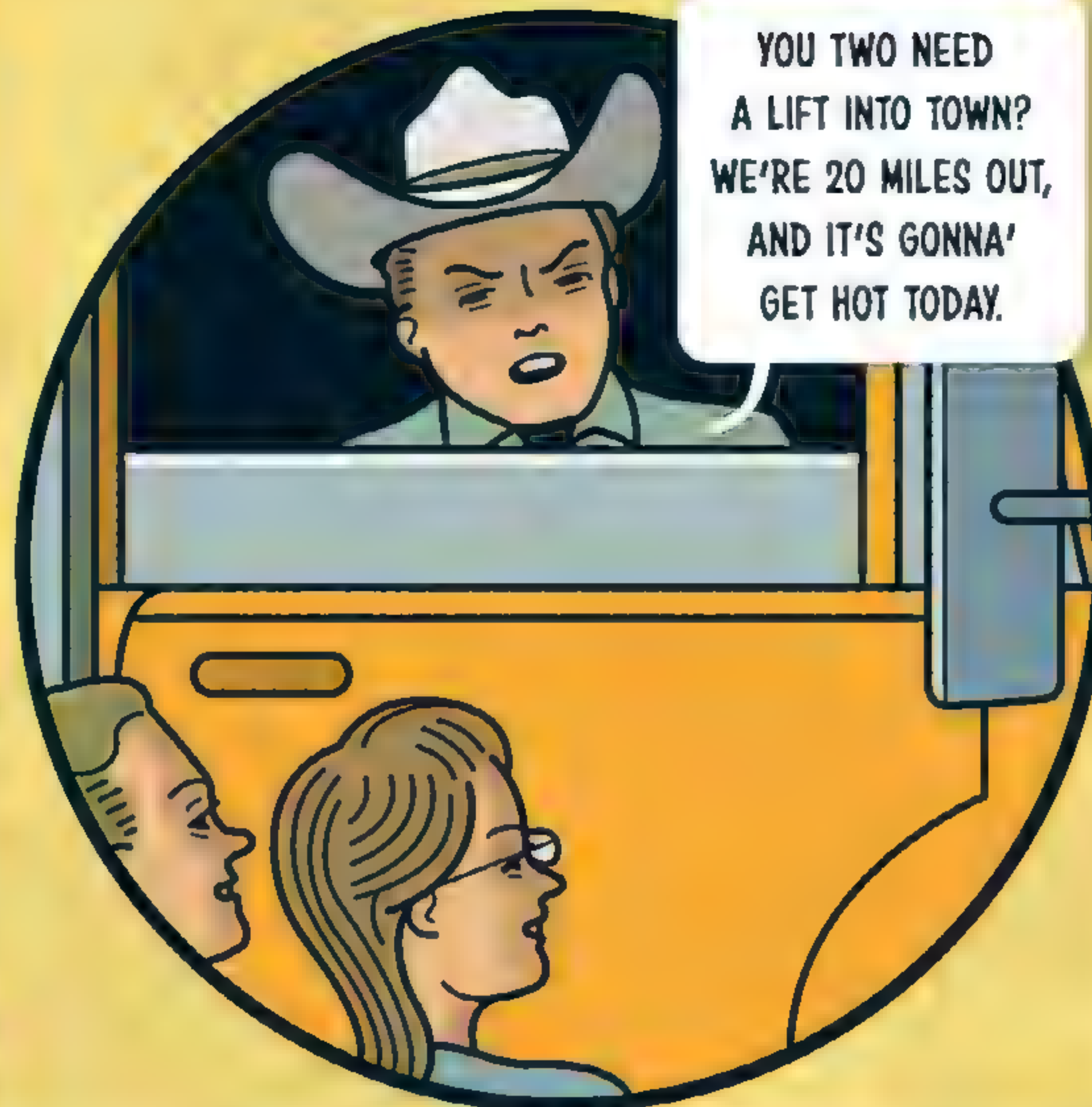
IT MAKES YOU REMEMBER OTHER THINGS, TOO.



ALL AROUND THEM WAS THE WARM HUM OF THE LIVING WORLD.

THEY CONTINUED ON THEIR WALK.





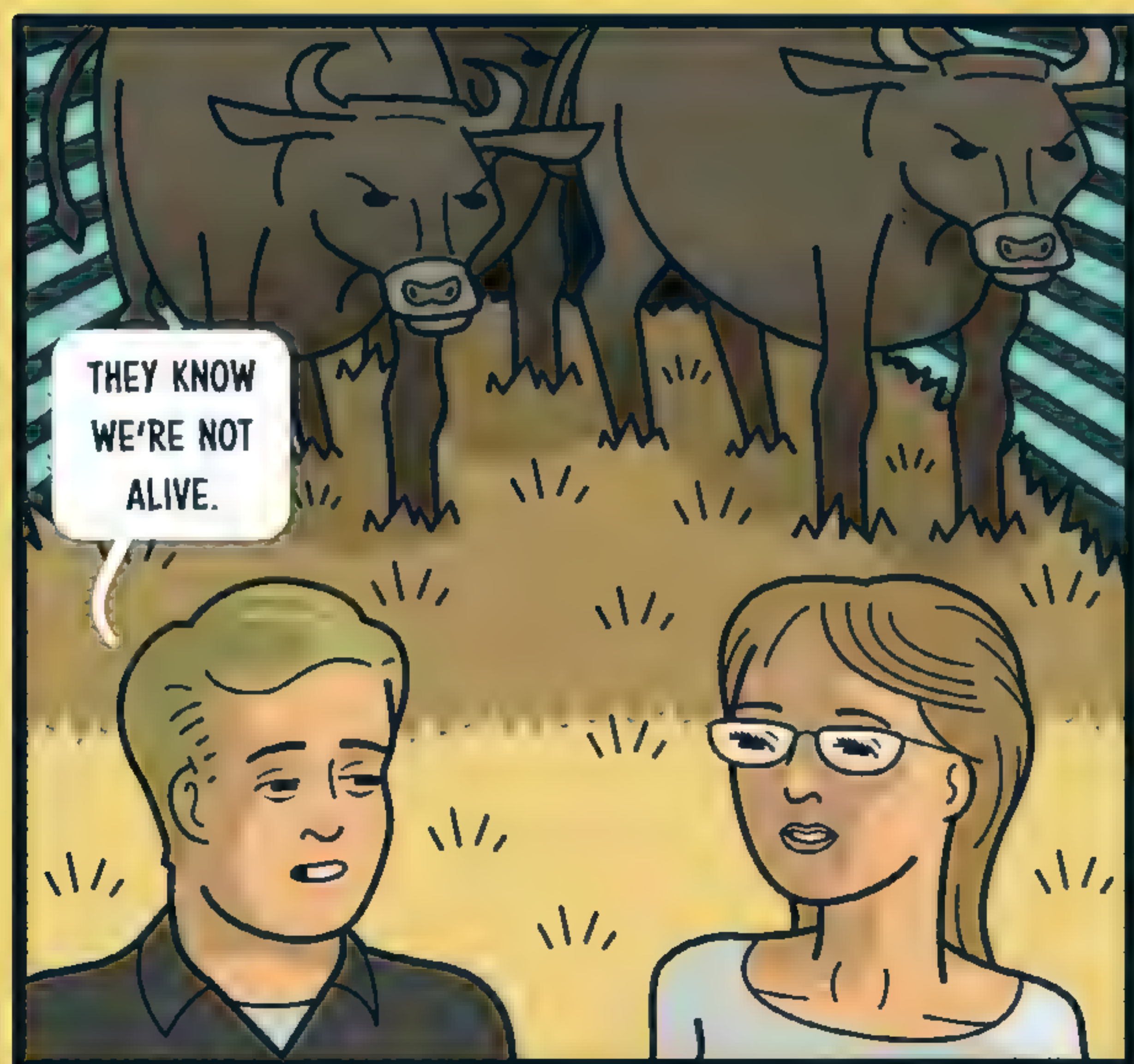




THEY SAT AS FAR FROM THEM AS THEY COULD.



WHEN JIM STOOD UP TO STRETCH HIS LEGS, THE ANIMALS BACKED UP FURIOUSLY AGAINST THE WALL.



THEY KNOW WE'RE NOT ALIVE.

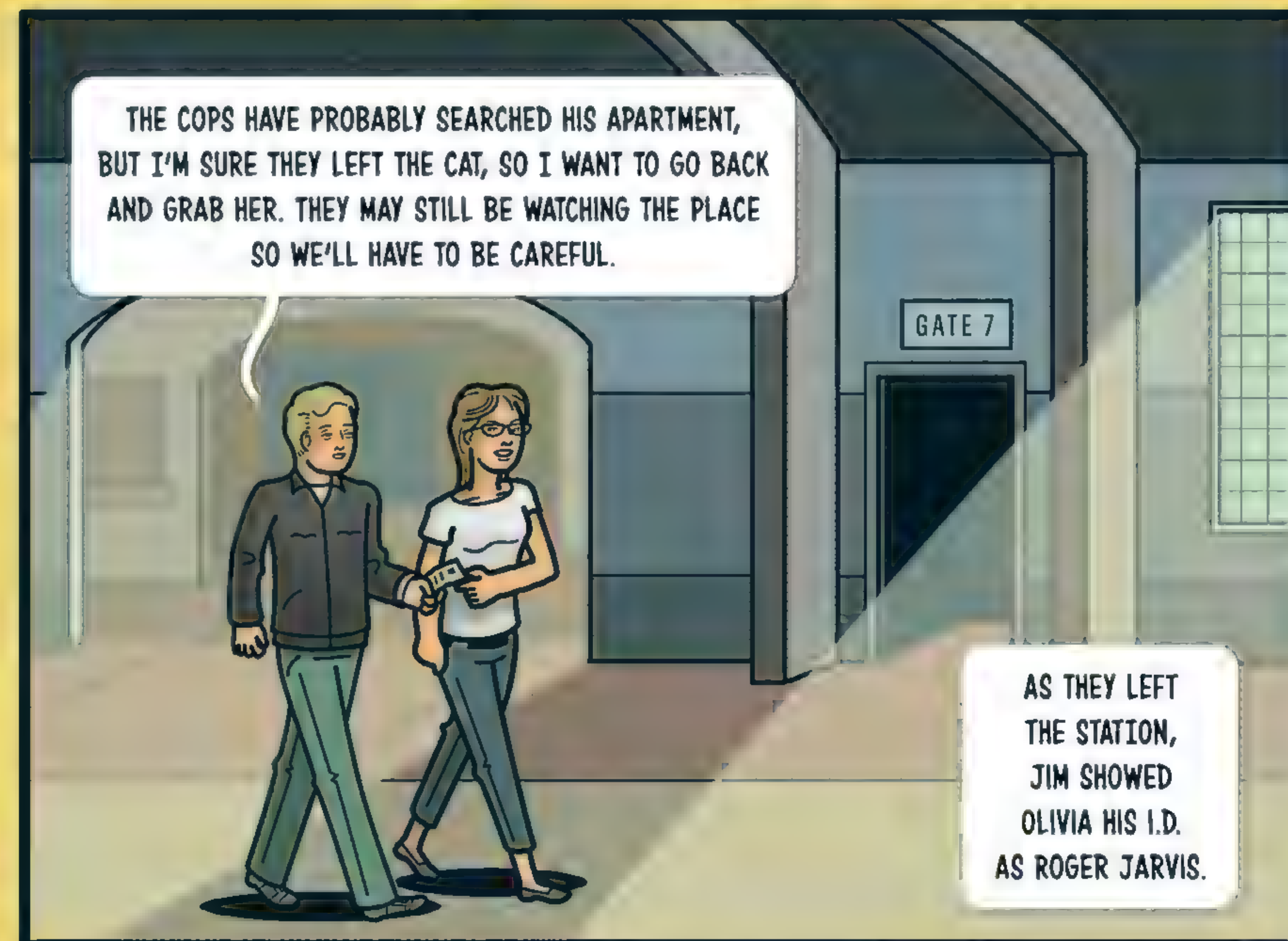
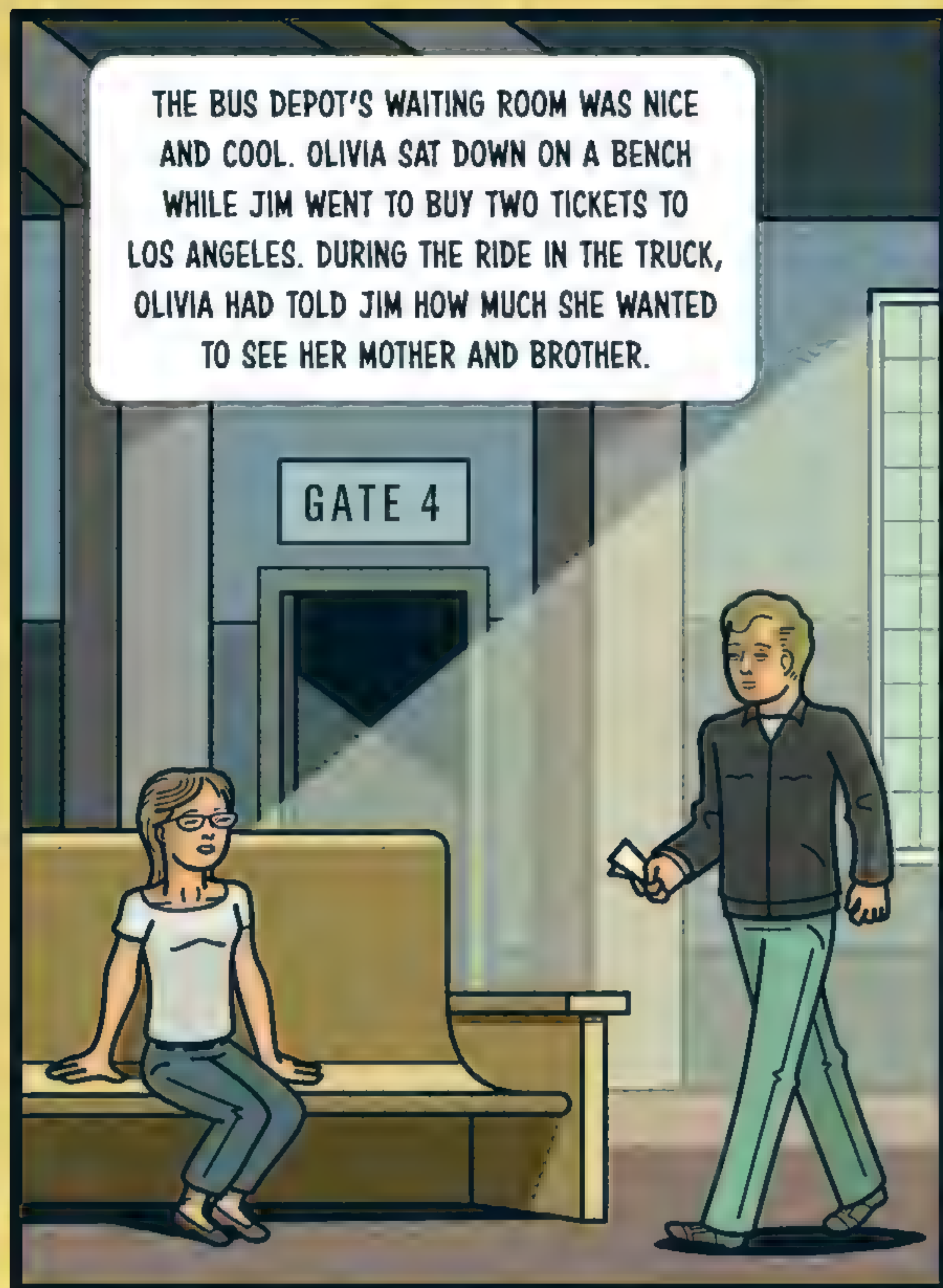


AN HOUR LATER, THEY PULLED INTO SAN BERNARDINO. THEY GOT OUT OF THE TRUCK AND THANKED THE MAN.

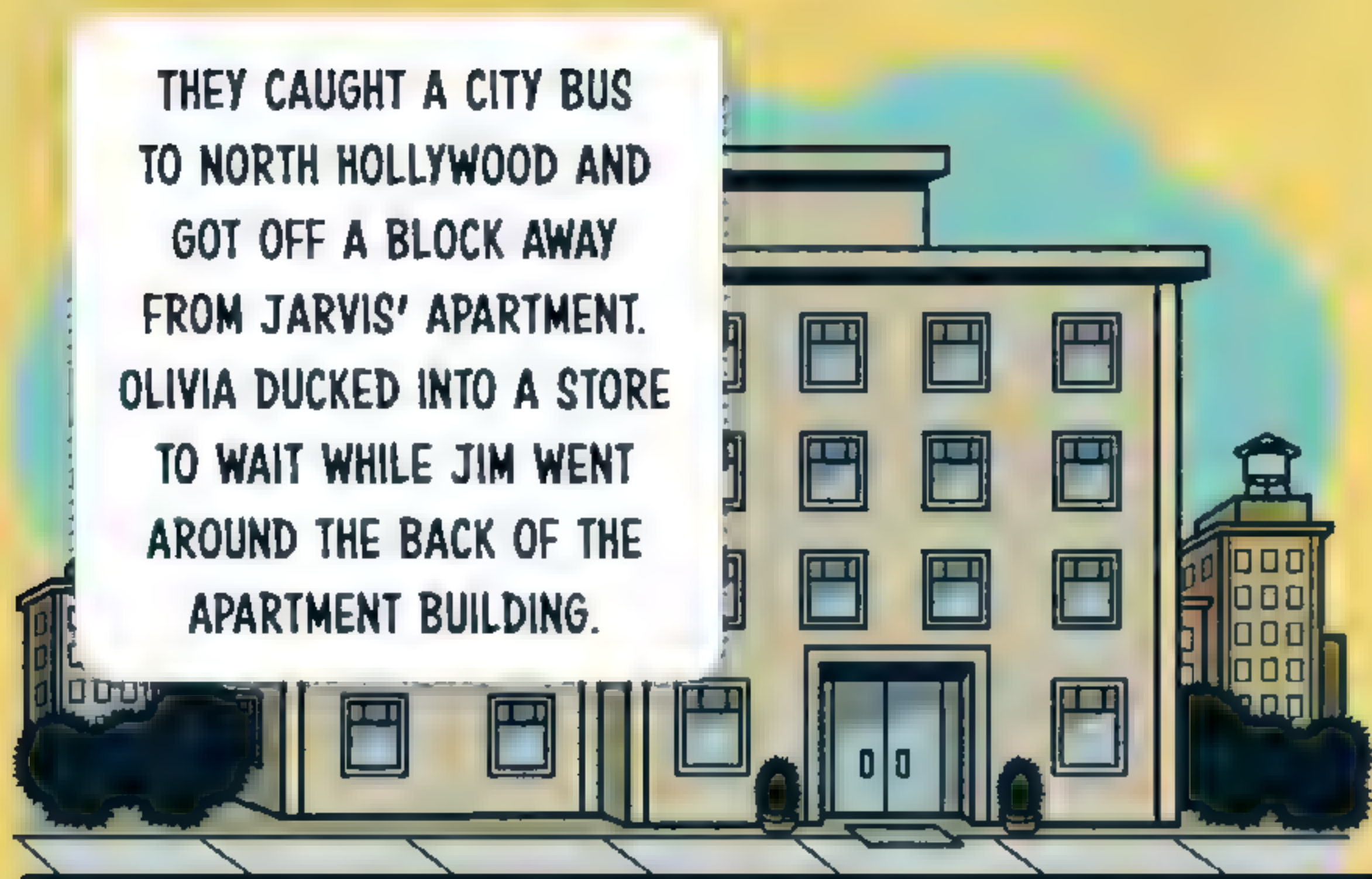


AS THE TRUCK PULLED AWAY, THE DOG STARED DOWN AT THEM.

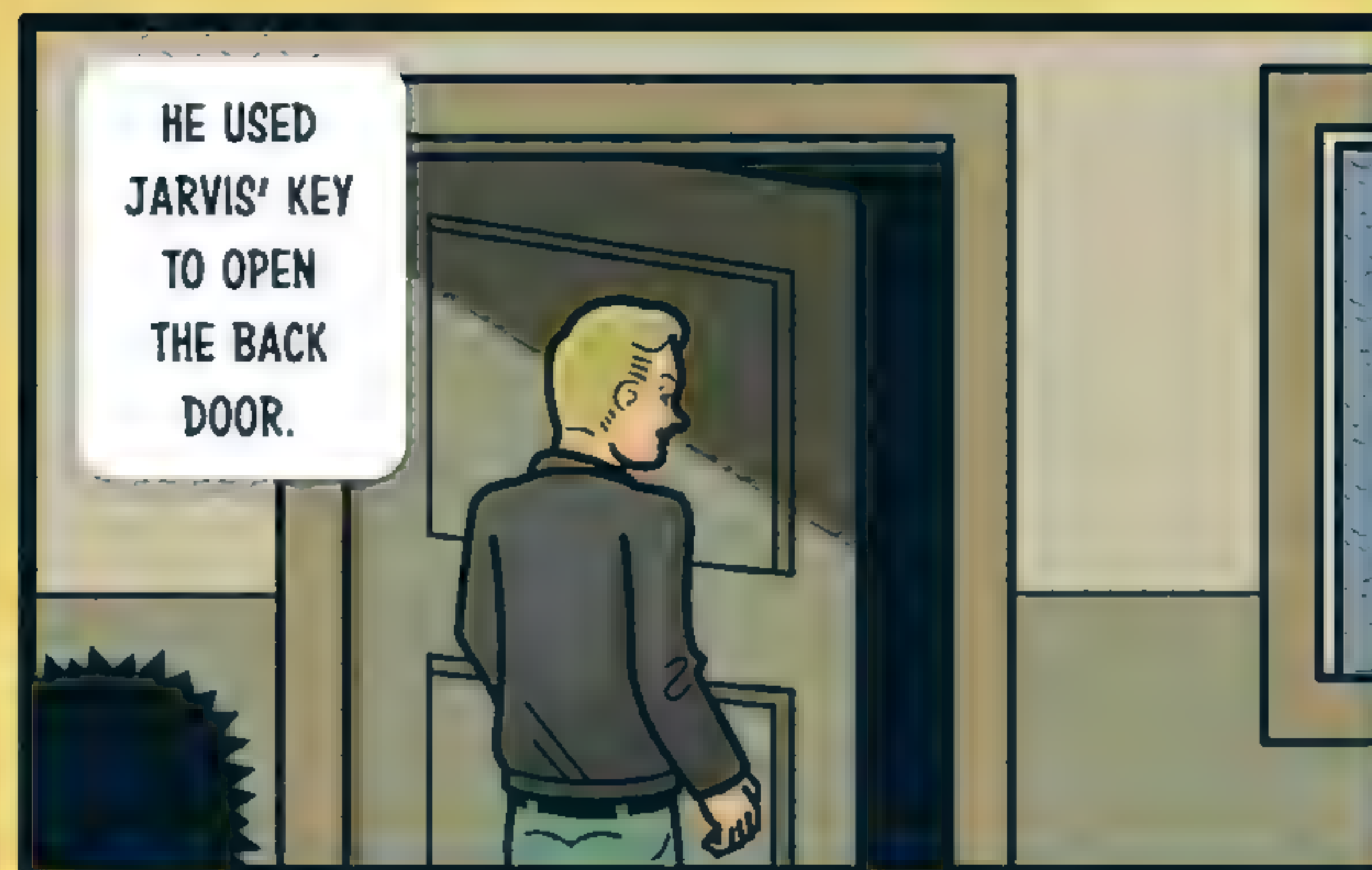








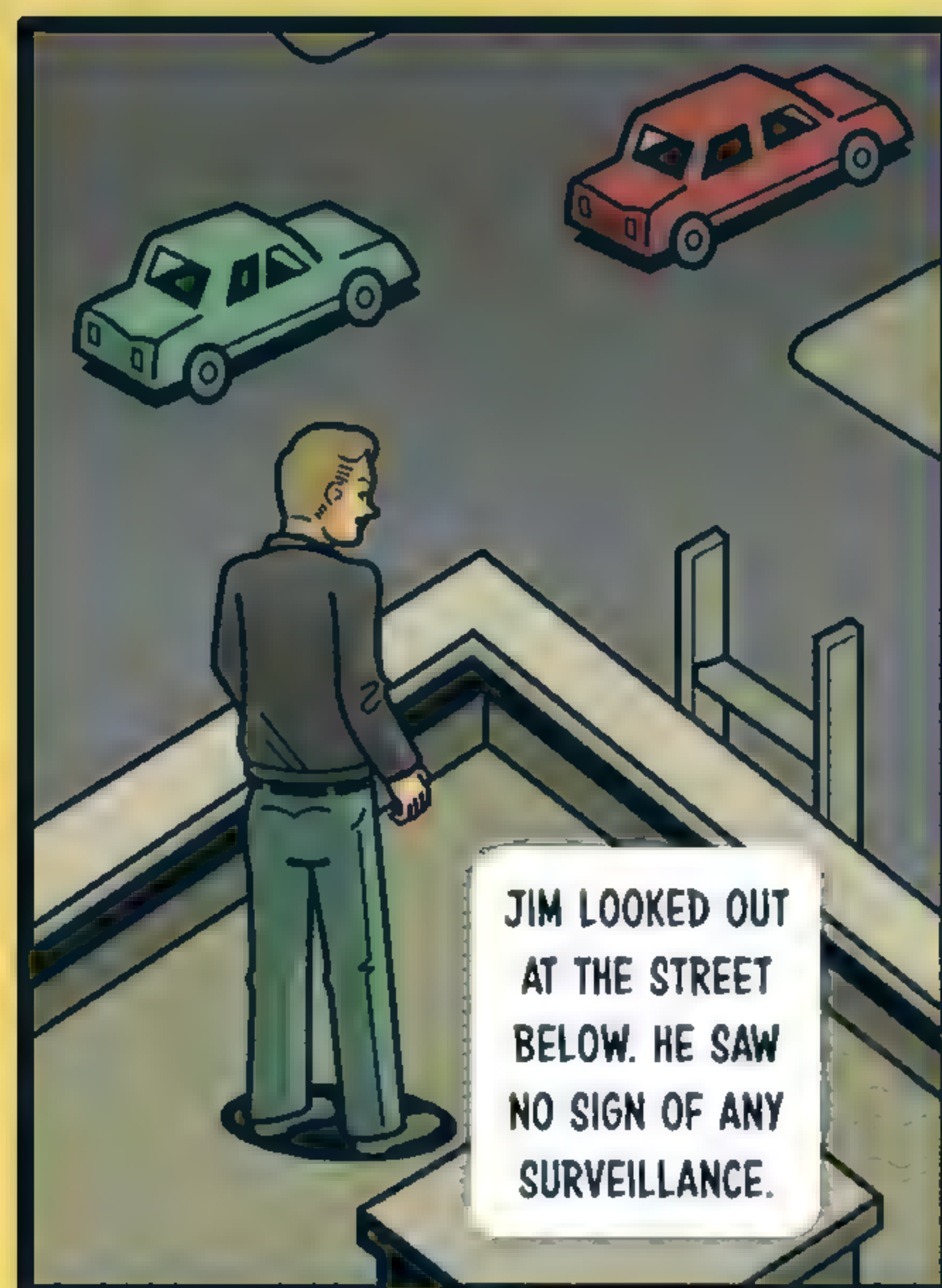
THEY CAUGHT A CITY BUS TO NORTH HOLLYWOOD AND GOT OFF A BLOCK AWAY FROM JARVIS' APARTMENT. OLIVIA DUCKED INTO A STORE TO WAIT WHILE JIM WENT AROUND THE BACK OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING.



HE USED JARVIS' KEY TO OPEN THE BACK DOOR.



HE THEN WALKED UP FOUR FLIGHTS OF STAIRS TO THE ROOF.



JIM LOOKED OUT AT THE STREET BELOW. HE SAW NO SIGN OF ANY SURVEILLANCE.



HERE, KITTY, KITTY. HERE, KITTY, KITTY.

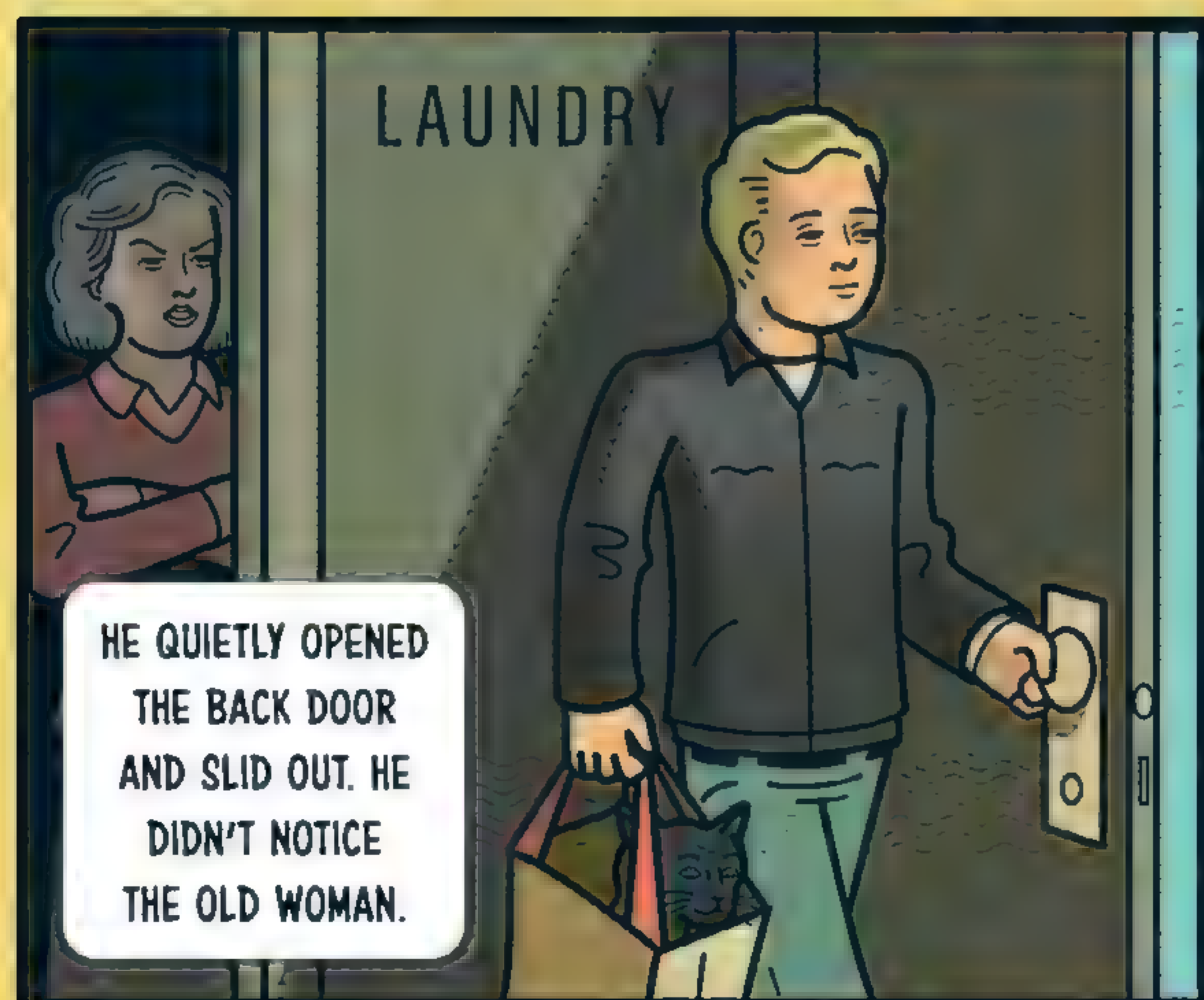
HE SLIPPED DOWN THE FIRE ESCAPE TO JARVIS' WINDOW.



YOU'RE THE ONLY ANIMAL WHO'S NOT AFRAID OF A SHADE. WHY IS THAT?



HE GOT TO THE LAUNDRY ROOM AND BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF.



HE QUIETLY OPENED THE BACK DOOR AND SLID OUT. HE DIDN'T NOTICE THE OLD WOMAN.



SHE WALKED BACK TO HER OFFICE, LOCKED THE DOOR, AND PICKED UP THE PHONE.



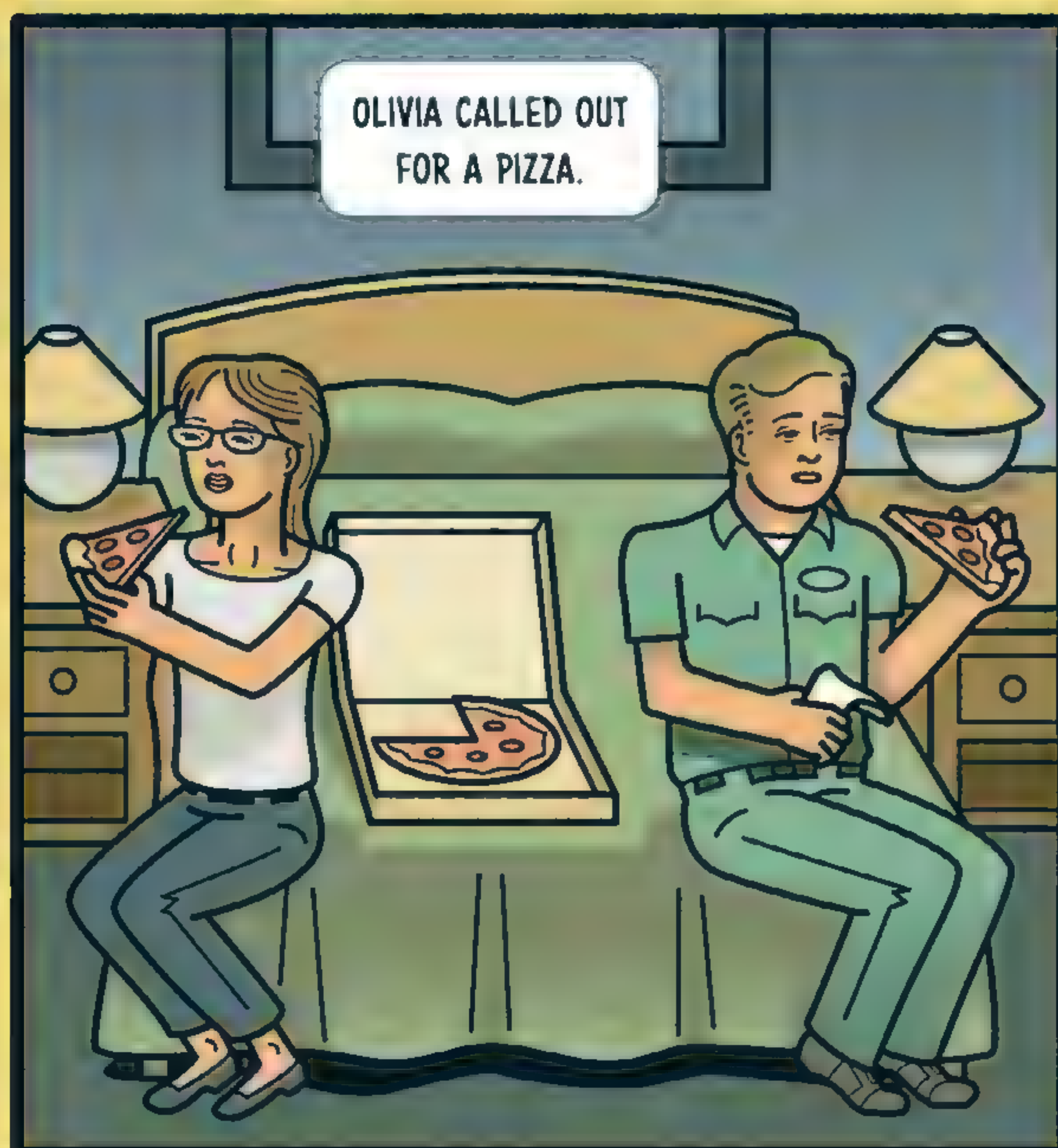




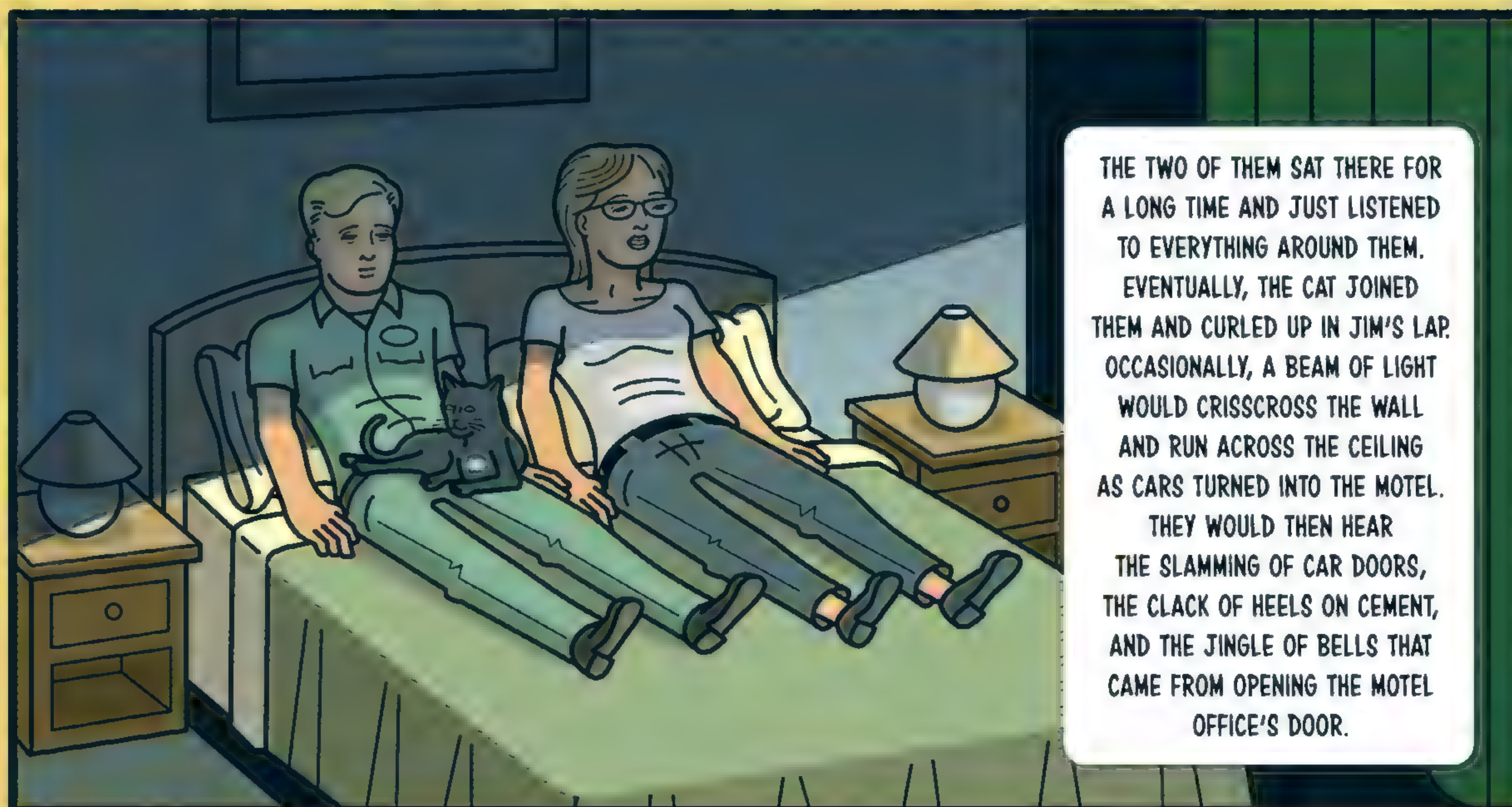
THAT EVENING  
THEY GOT A ROOM  
AT A MOTEL  
OFF SUNSET.



THE CLERK MADE  
A BIT OF A FACE  
AT THE WORN BILLS,  
BUT THEY PASSED  
INSPECTION AS  
LEGAL TENDER.

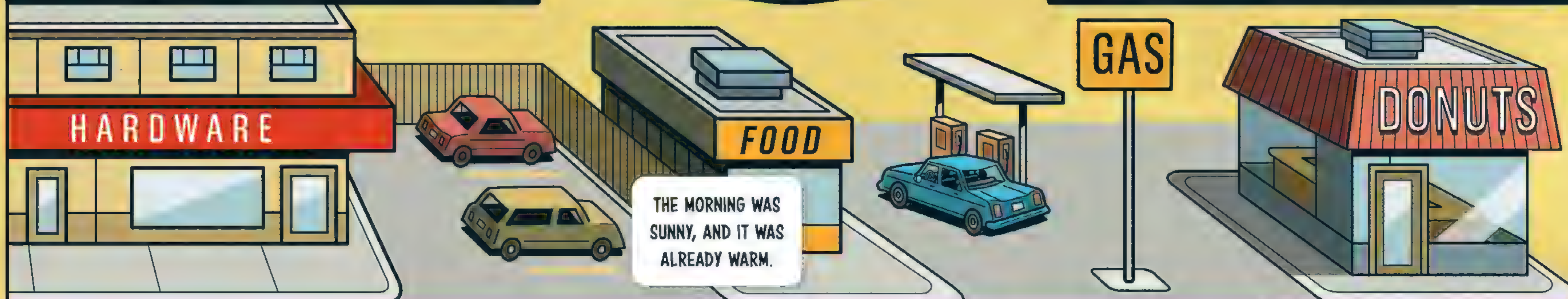
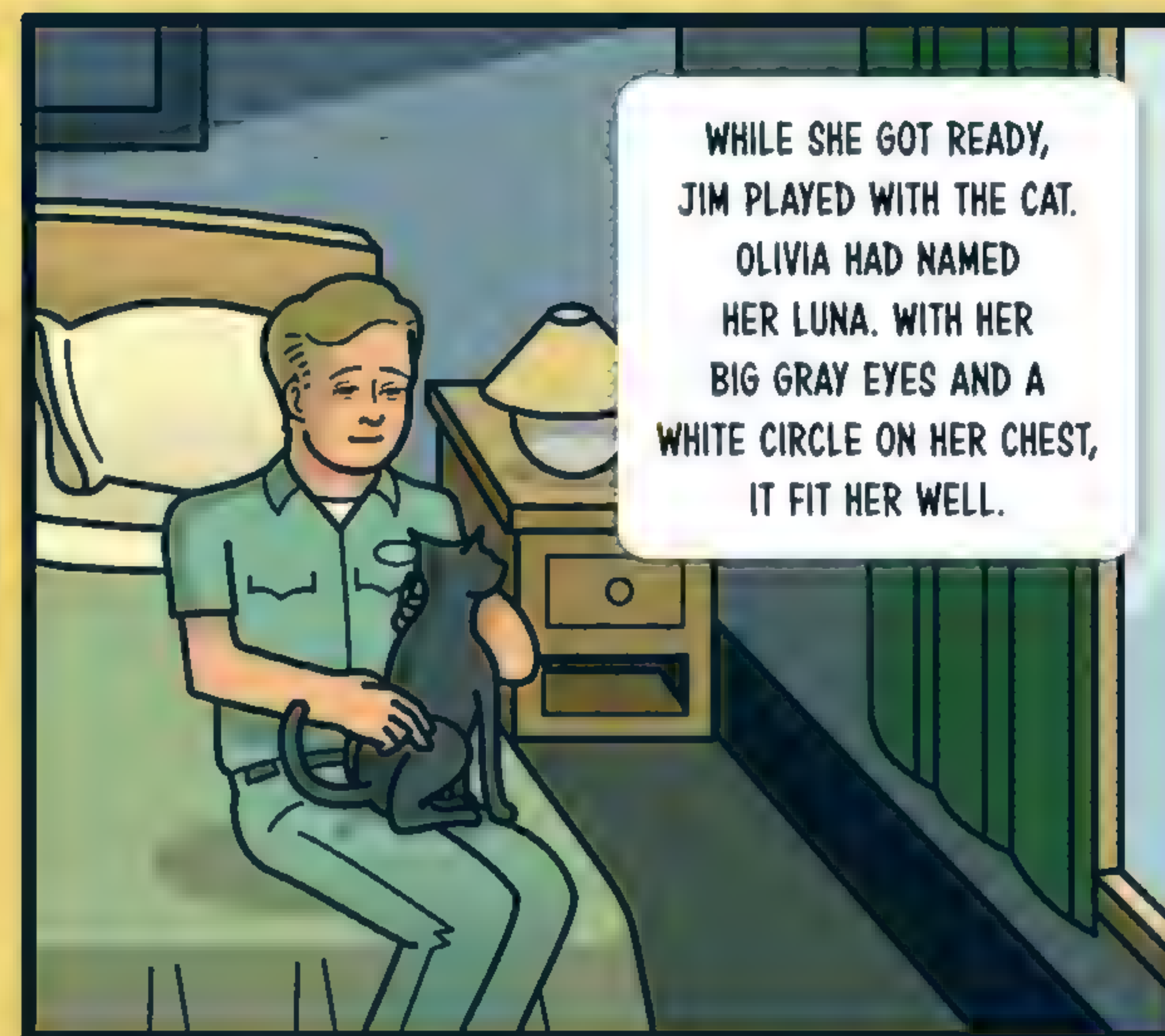


OLIVIA CALLED OUT  
FOR A PIZZA.



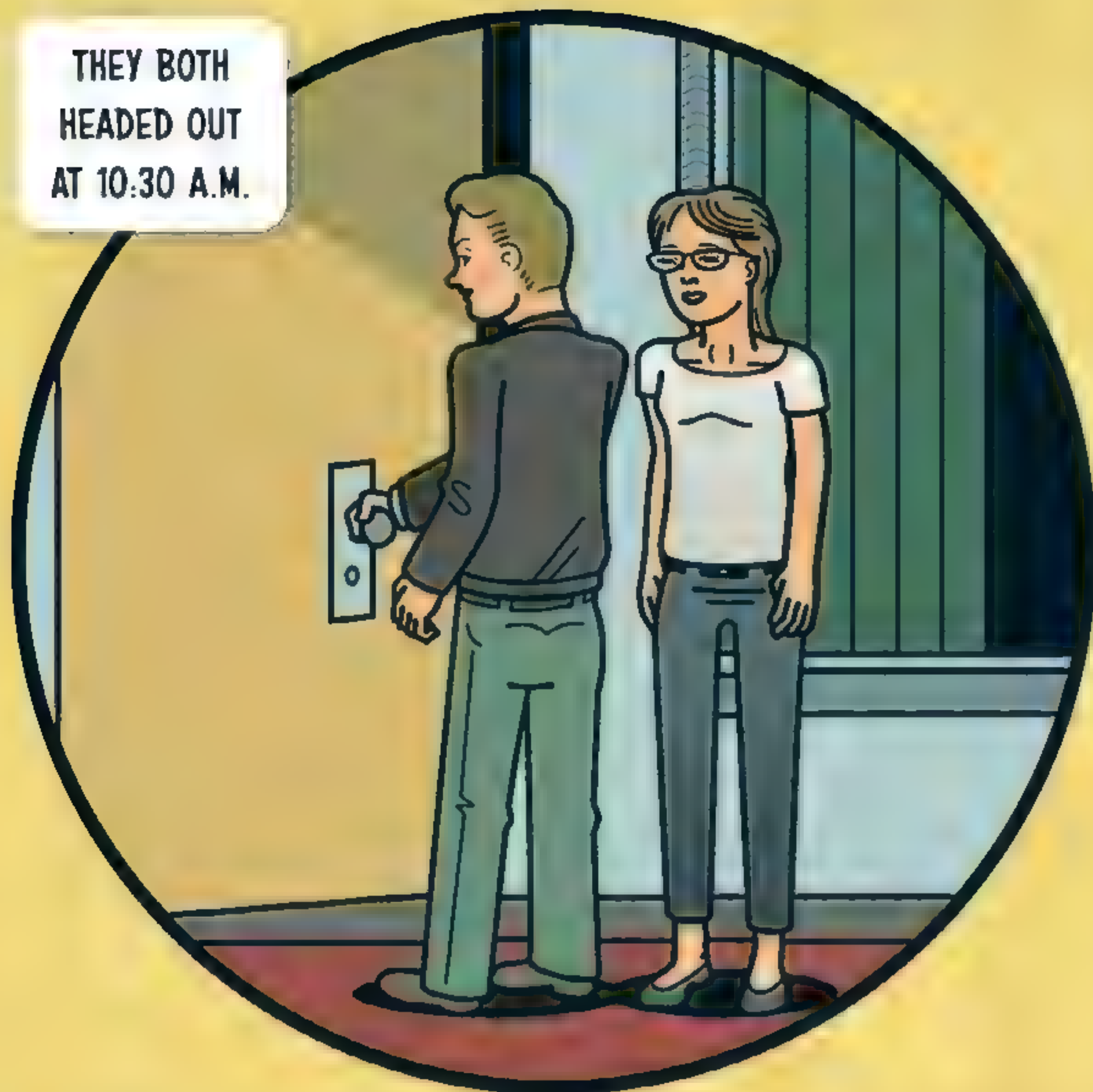
THE TWO OF THEM SAT THERE FOR  
A LONG TIME AND JUST LISTENED  
TO EVERYTHING AROUND THEM.  
EVENTUALLY, THE CAT JOINED  
THEM AND CURLED UP IN JIM'S LAP.  
OCCASIONALLY, A BEAM OF LIGHT  
WOULD CRISSCROSS THE WALL  
AND RUN ACROSS THE CEILING  
AS CARS TURNED INTO THE MOTEL.  
THEY WOULD THEN HEAR  
THE SLAMMING OF CAR DOORS,  
THE CLACK OF HEELS ON CEMENT,  
AND THE JINGLE OF BELLS THAT  
CAME FROM OPENING THE MOTEL  
OFFICE'S DOOR.







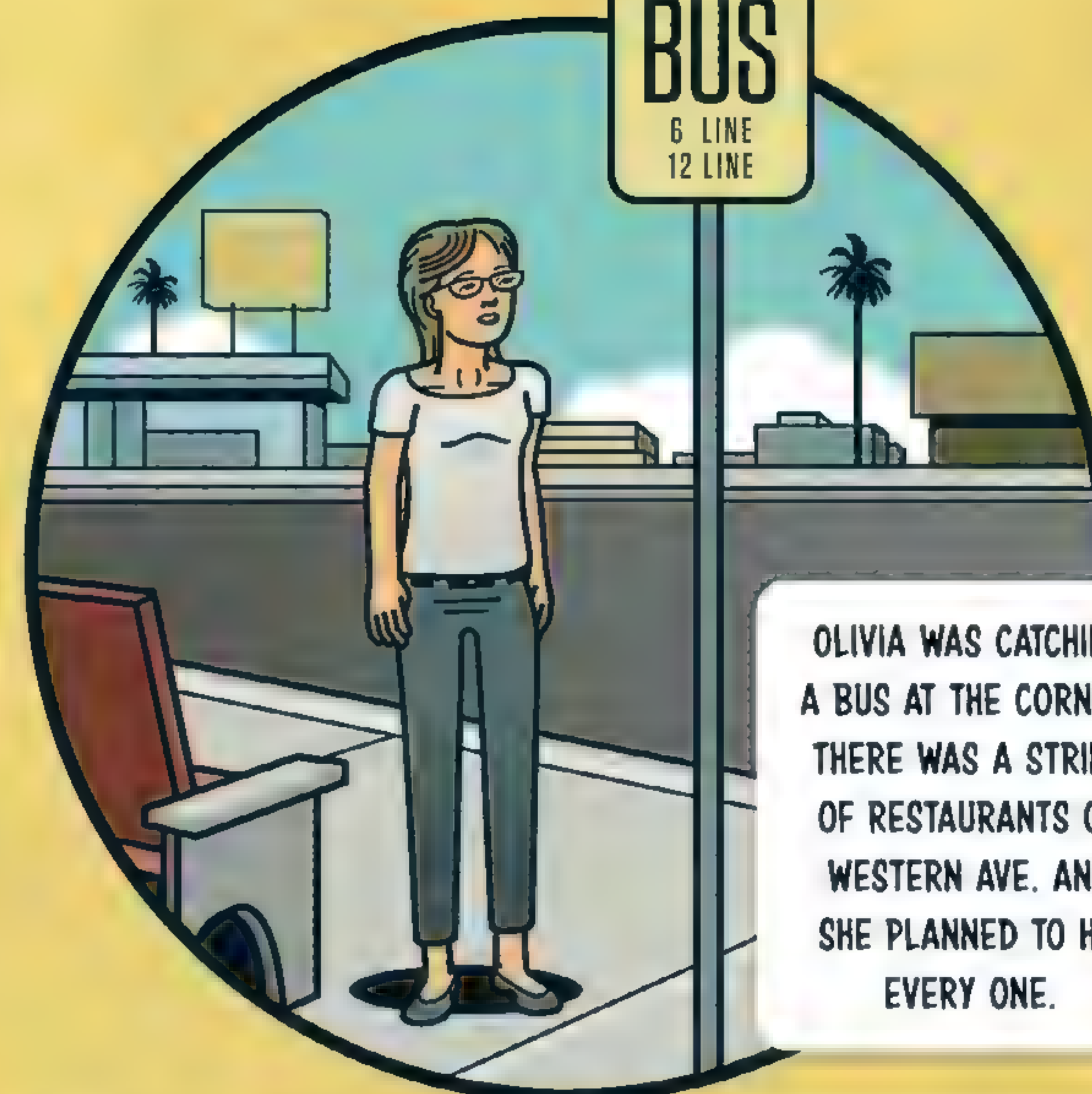
THEY BOTH  
HEADED OUT  
AT 10:30 A.M.



JIM WALKED  
TOWARD A  
LINE OF  
GAS STATIONS  
A FEW BLOCKS  
FROM THE  
MOTEL.

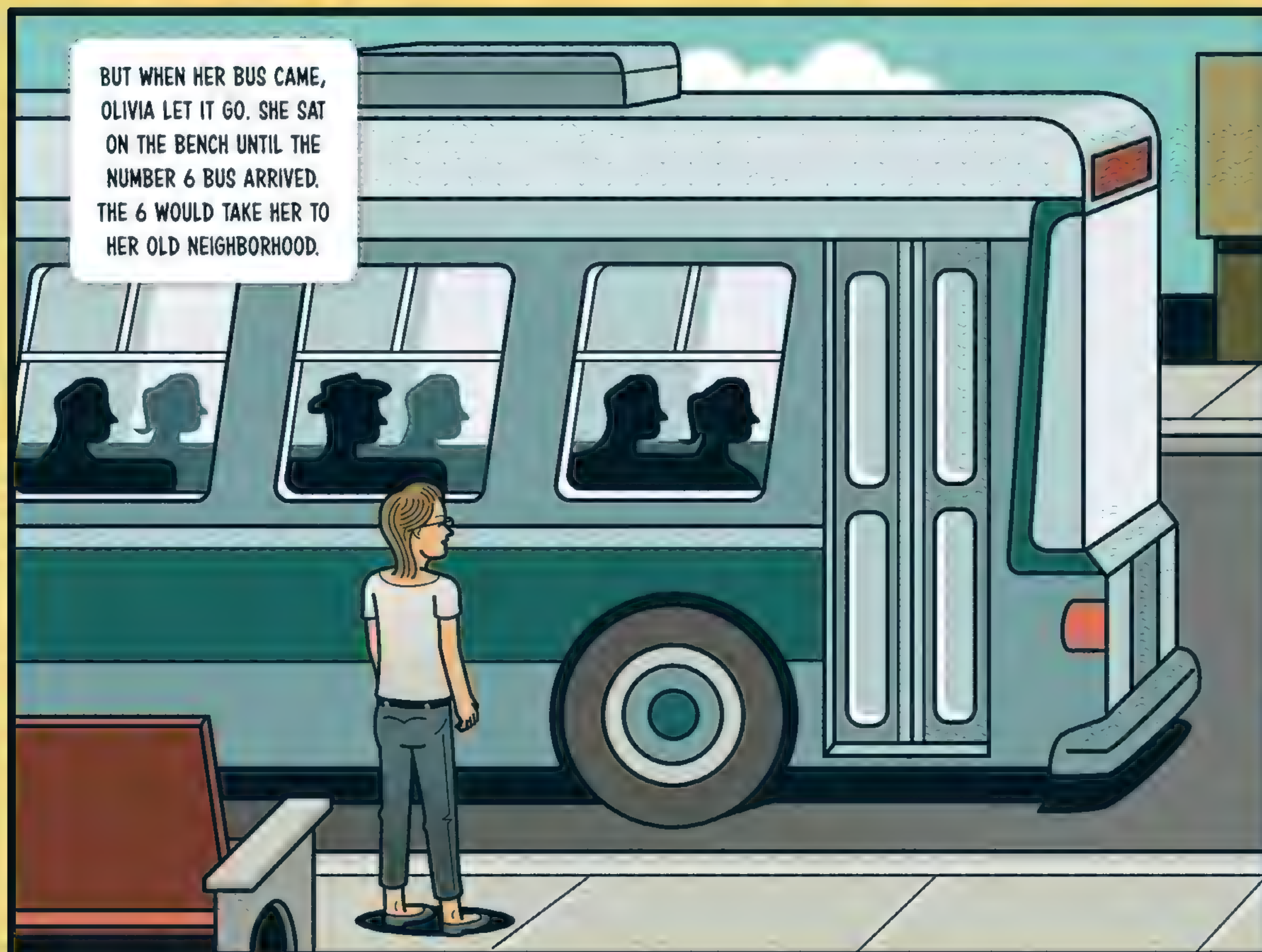


BUS  
6 LINE  
12 LINE



OLIVIA WAS CATCHING  
A BUS AT THE CORNER.  
THERE WAS A STRING  
OF RESTAURANTS ON  
WESTERN AVE. AND  
SHE PLANNED TO HIT  
EVERY ONE.

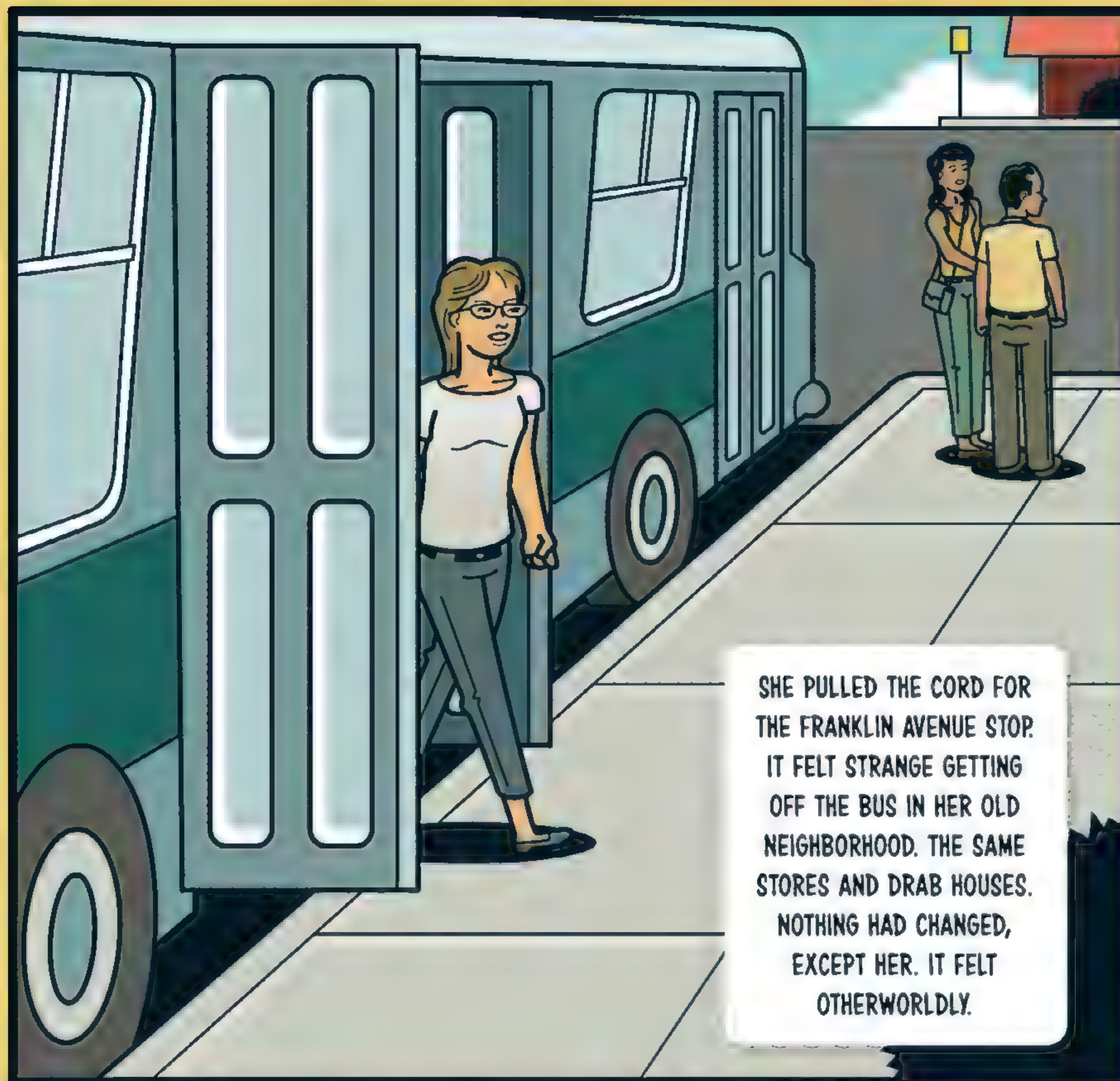
BUT WHEN HER BUS CAME,  
OLIVIA LET IT GO. SHE SAT  
ON THE BENCH UNTIL THE  
NUMBER 6 BUS ARRIVED.  
THE 6 WOULD TAKE HER TO  
HER OLD NEIGHBORHOOD.



SHE LOOKED AROUND BEFORE  
BOARDING. HER HEART WAS  
POUNDING AS THE BUS  
DOORS CLOSED. WHEN IT  
PULLED OUT INTO TRAFFIC,  
SHE BREATHED A SIGH  
OF RELIEF.



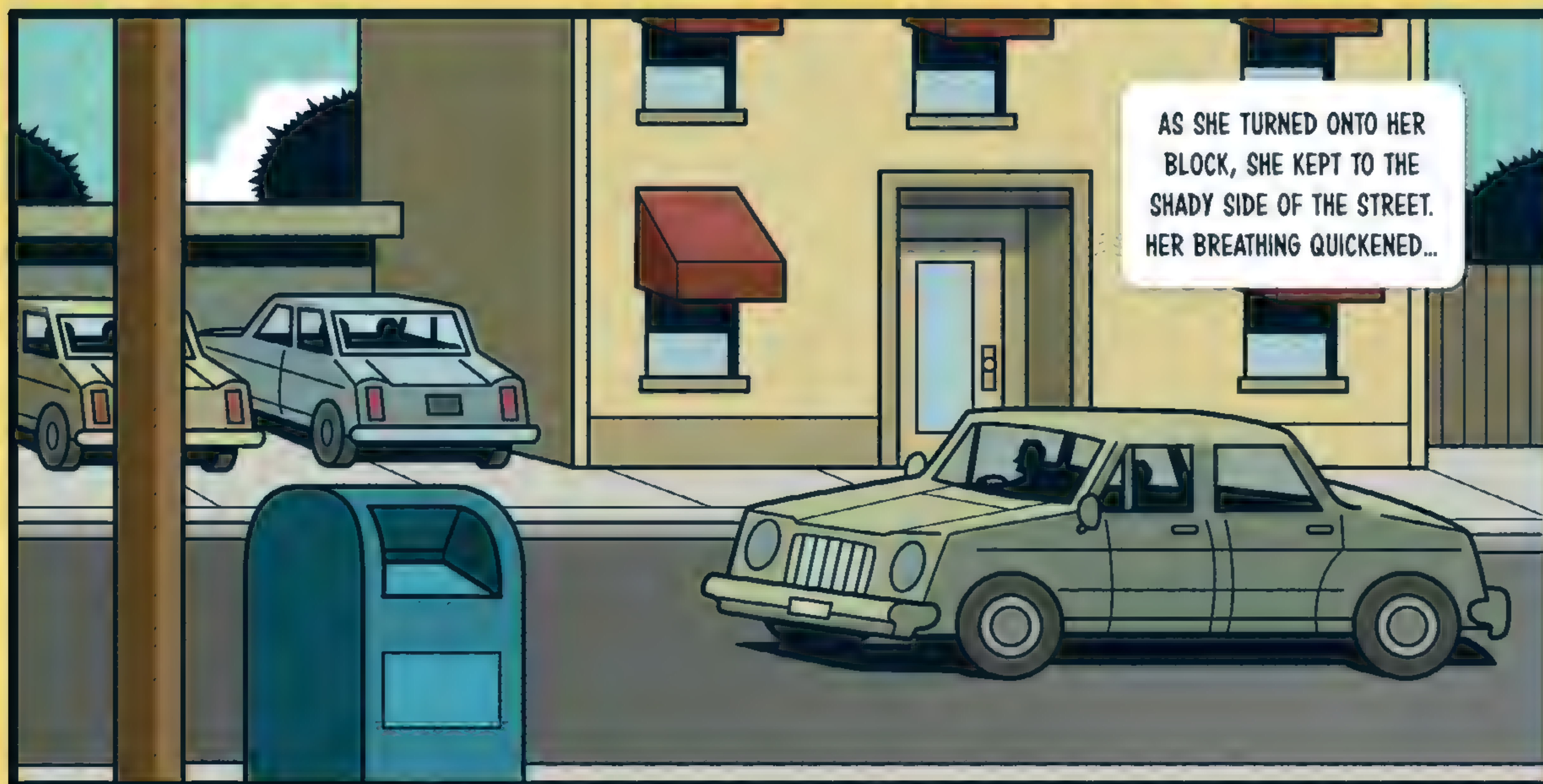




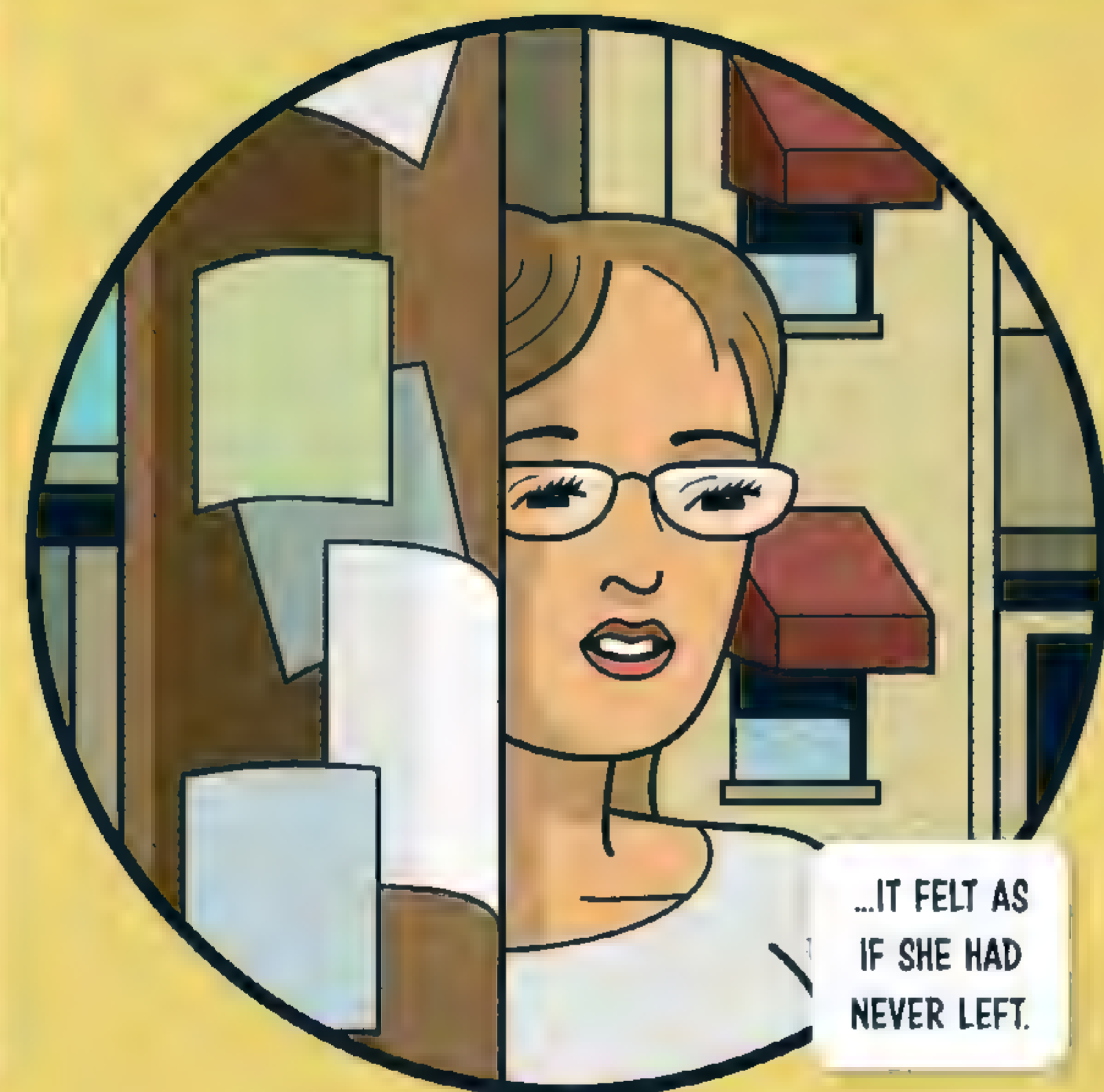
SHE PULLED THE CORD FOR THE FRANKLIN AVENUE STOP. IT FELT STRANGE GETTING OFF THE BUS IN HER OLD NEIGHBORHOOD. THE SAME STORES AND DRAB HOUSES. NOTHING HAD CHANGED, EXCEPT HER. IT FELT OTHERWORLDLY.



SHE HELD HER HEAD DOWN AND WALKED QUICKLY ALONG THE EDGE OF THE PARK. SHE WANTED TO AVOID RUNNING INTO SOMEONE SHE KNEW.

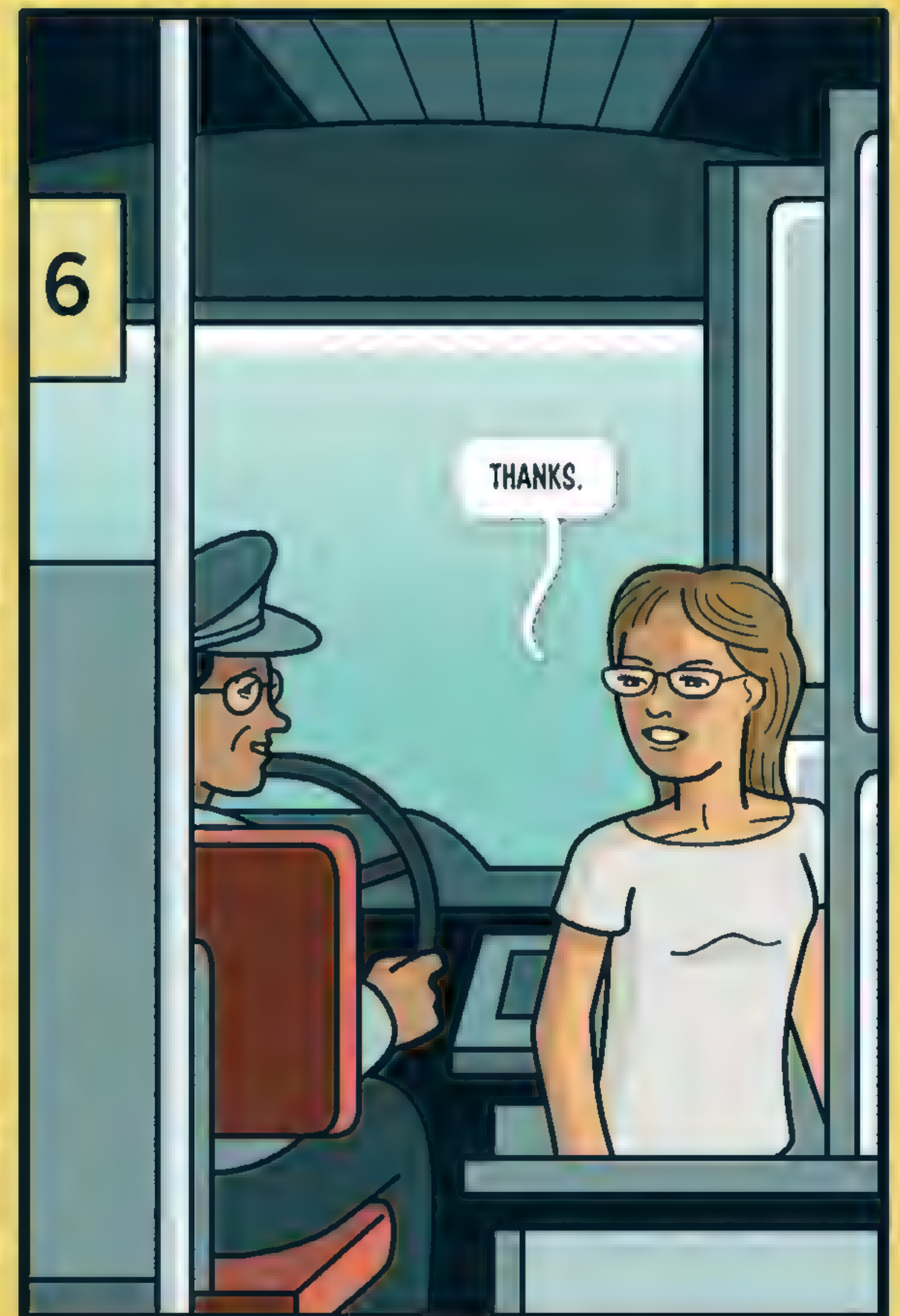
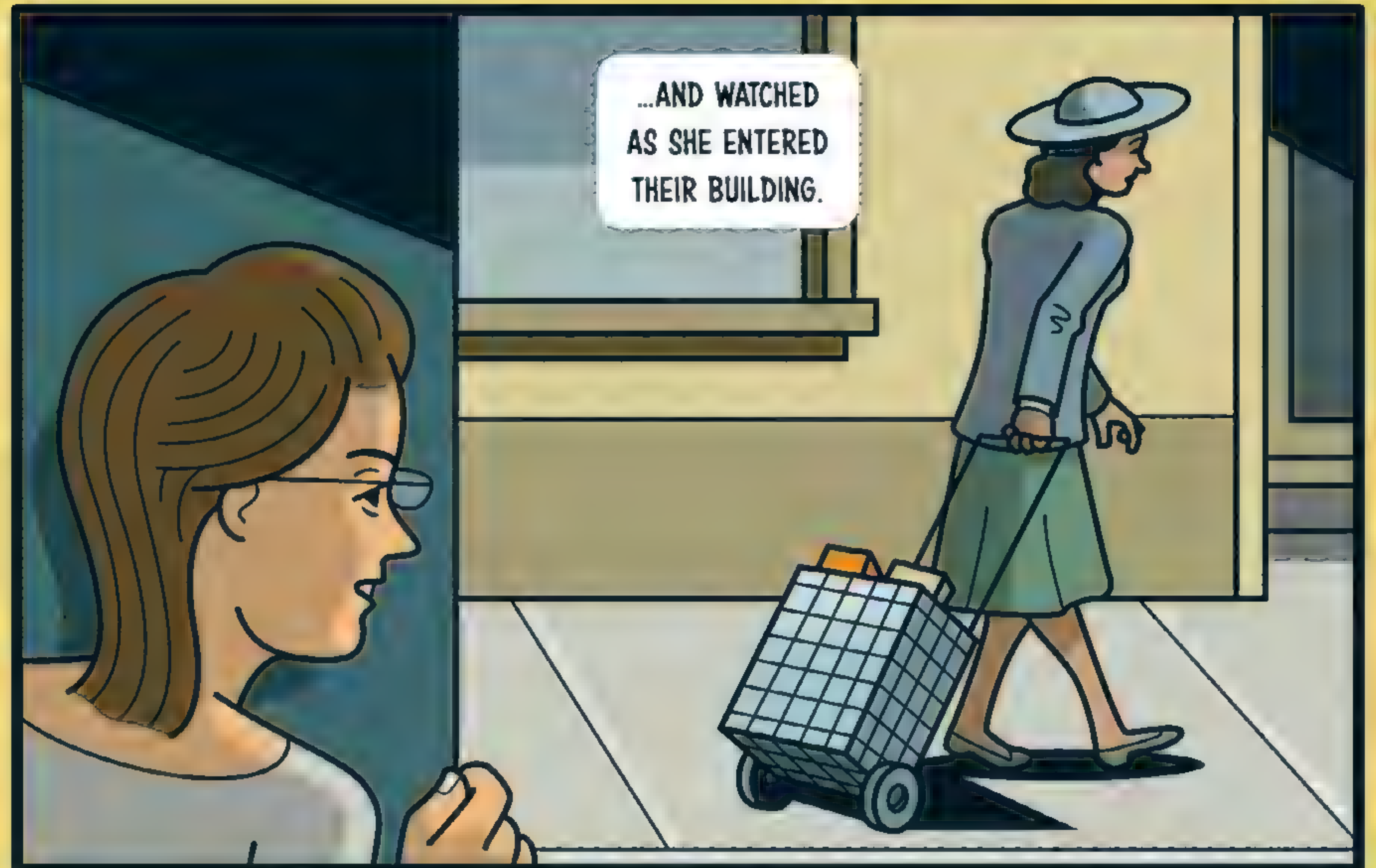


AS SHE TURNED ONTO HER BLOCK, SHE KEPT TO THE SHADY SIDE OF THE STREET. HER BREATHING QUICKENED...



...IT FELT AS IF SHE HAD NEVER LEFT.







SHE RAPPED LIGHTLY ON THE DOOR.  
SHE HEARD THE CHAIN DROP AND  
SAW JIM'S FACE AS HE OPENED UP.  
HE WAS SMILING.



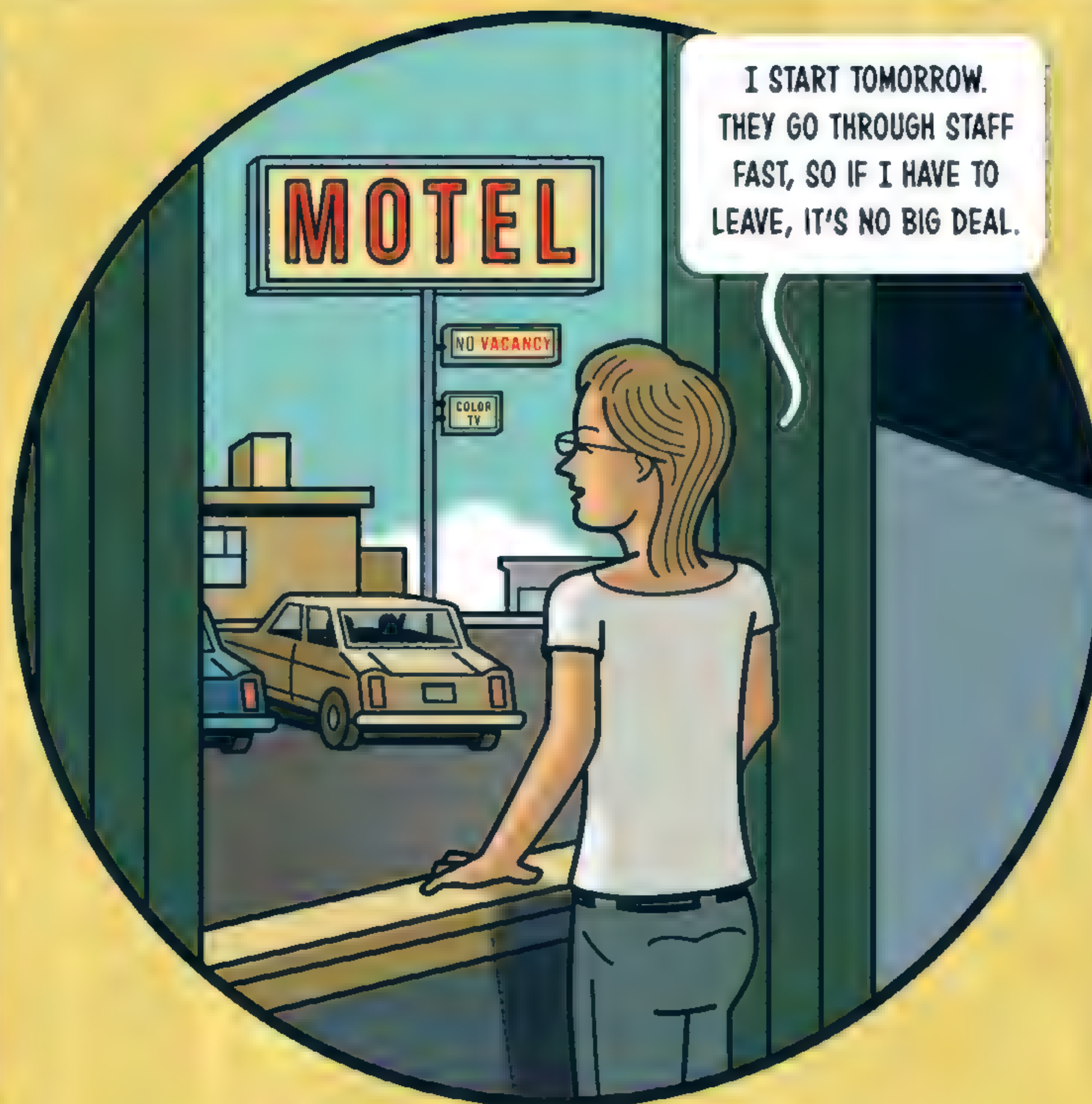
I ALREADY PUT IN HALF  
A DAY AT THE SHELL ON  
FIGUEROA. THEY WERE  
SHORTHANDED AND  
GLAD TO SEE ME.  
LOOKS LIKE IT WILL BE  
A REGULAR JOB, FIVE  
DAYS A WEEK, UNDER  
THE TABLE. HOW DID  
IT GO FOR YOU?



THE "COUNTRY KITCHEN" ON WESTERN.  
WAITING TABLES, THREE DAYS A WEEK.



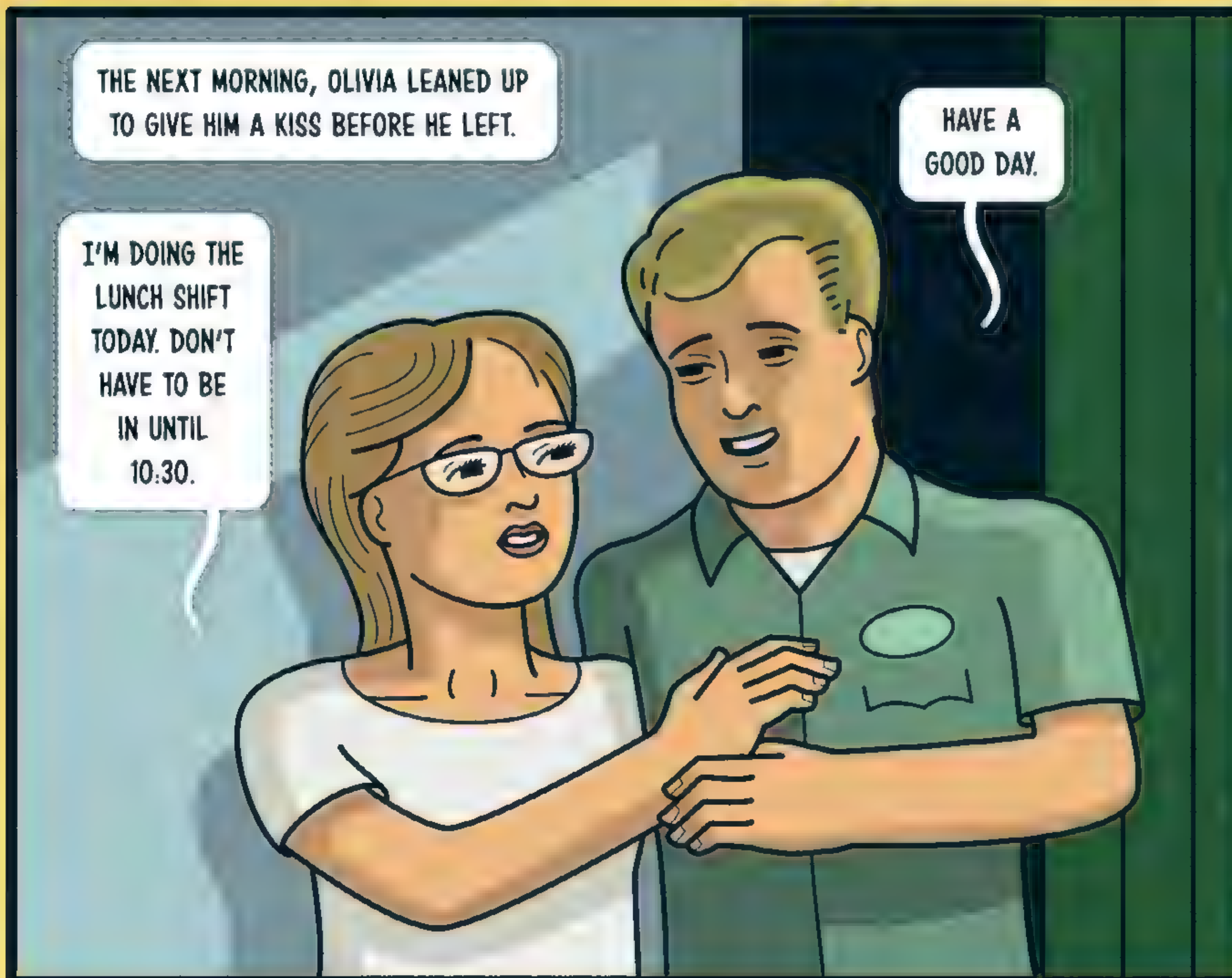
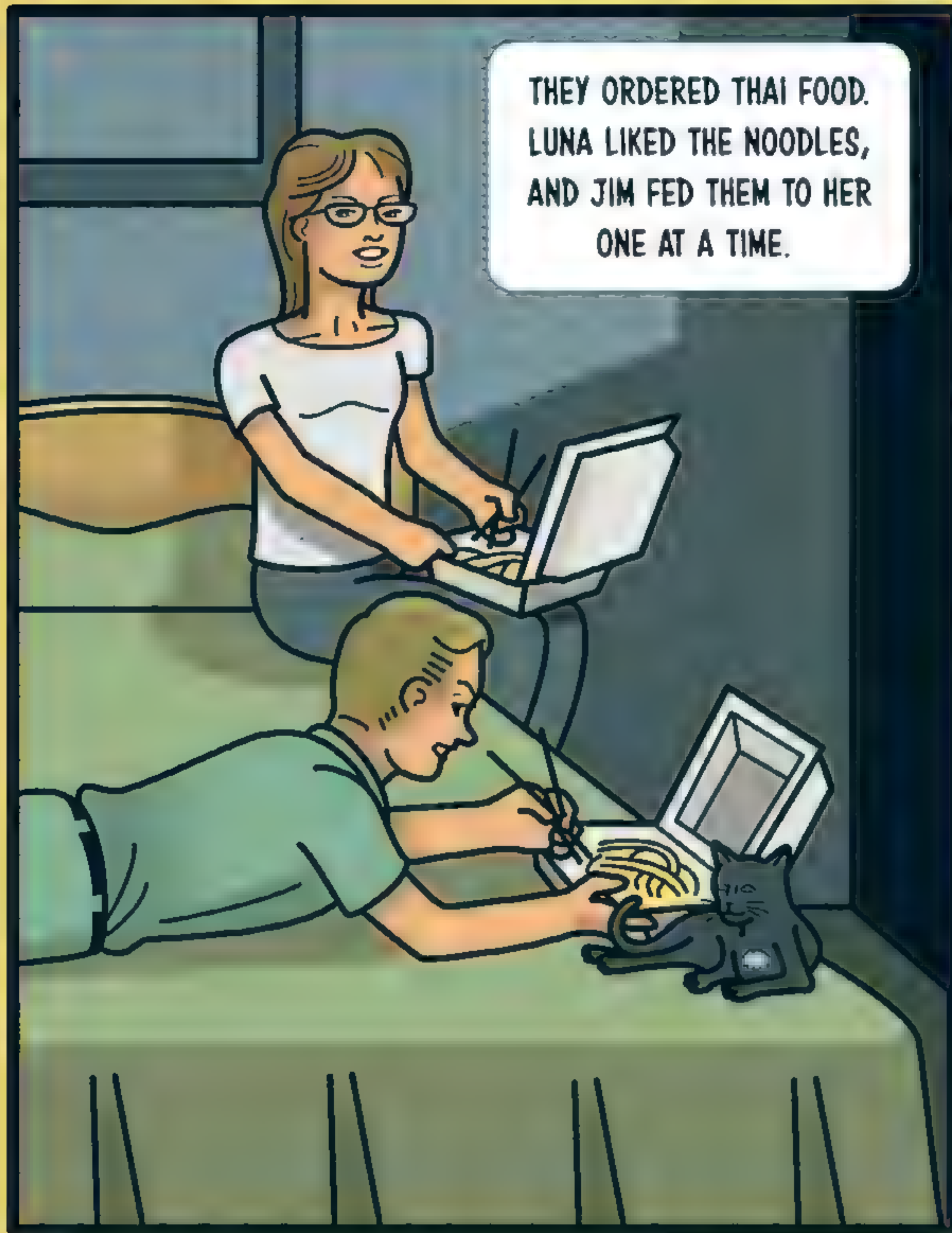
I START TOMORROW.  
THEY GO THROUGH STAFF  
FAST, SO IF I HAVE TO  
LEAVE, IT'S NO BIG DEAL.



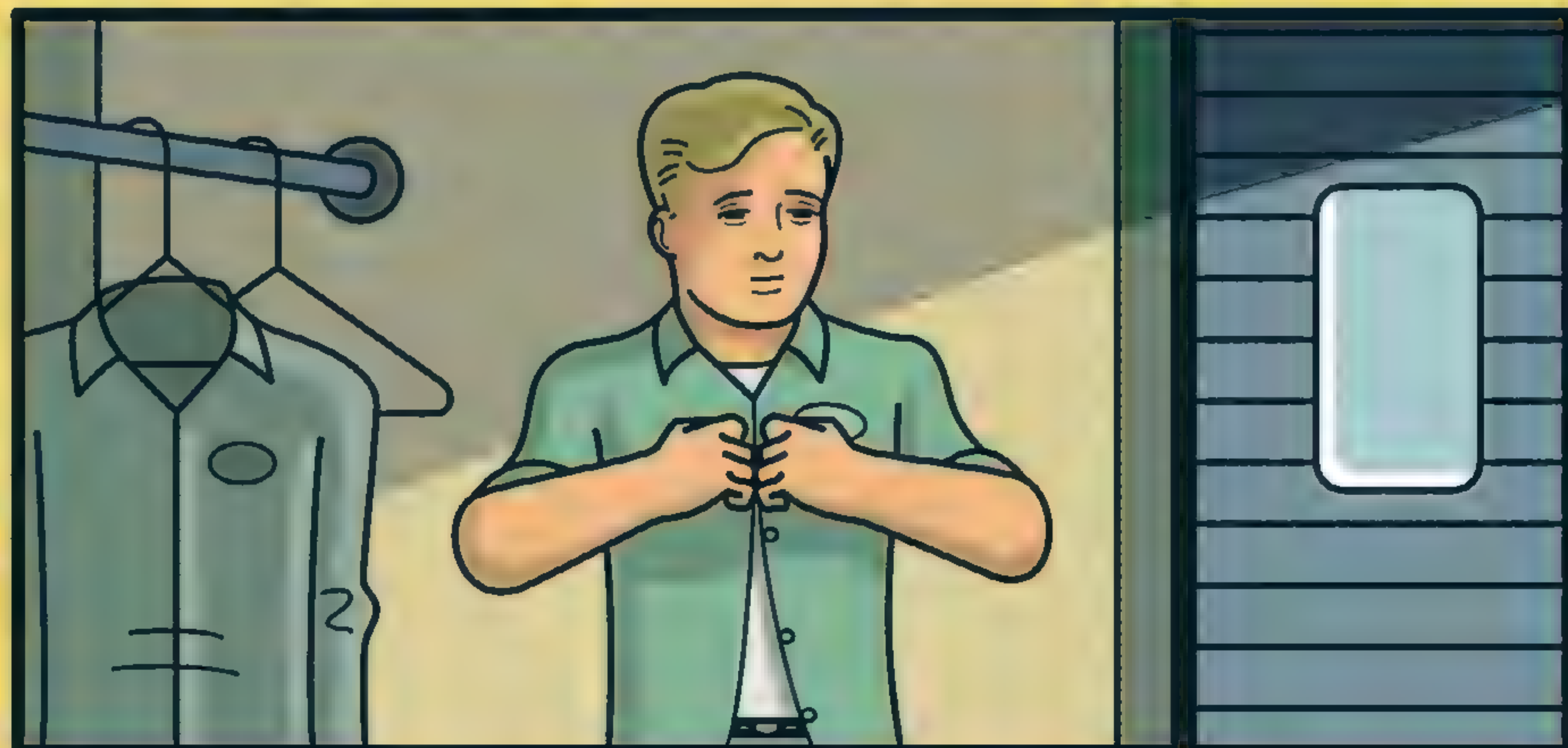
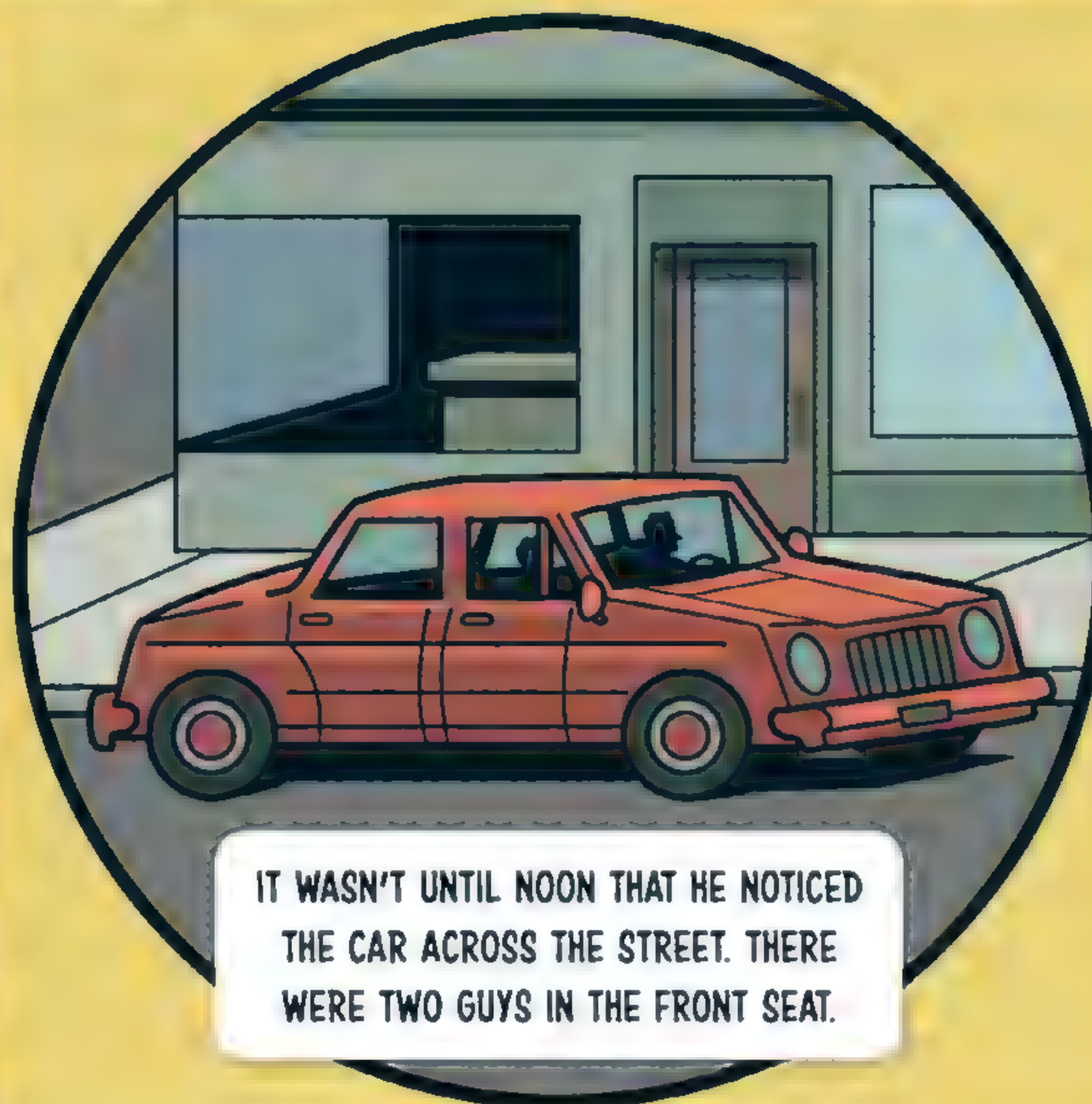
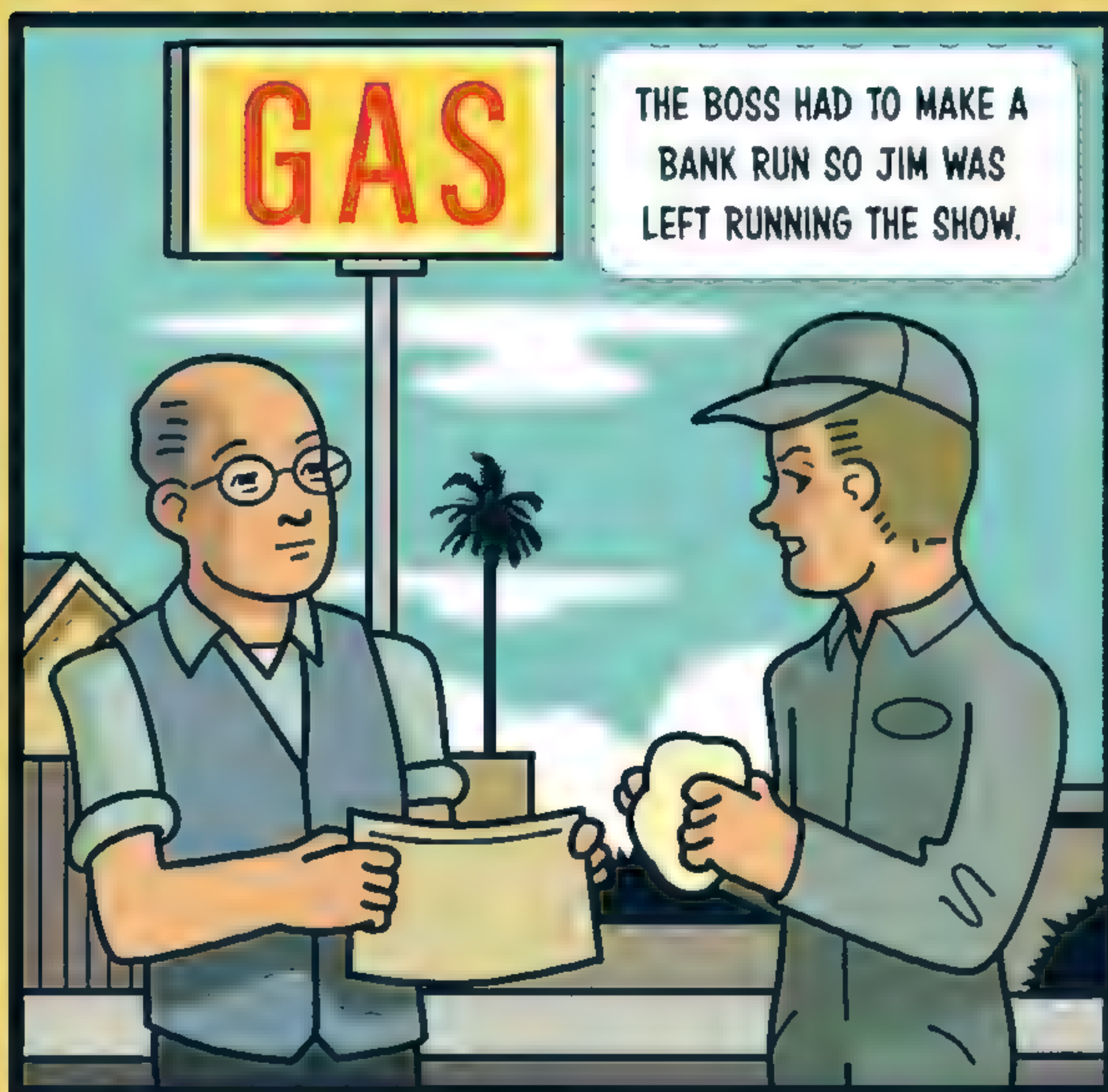
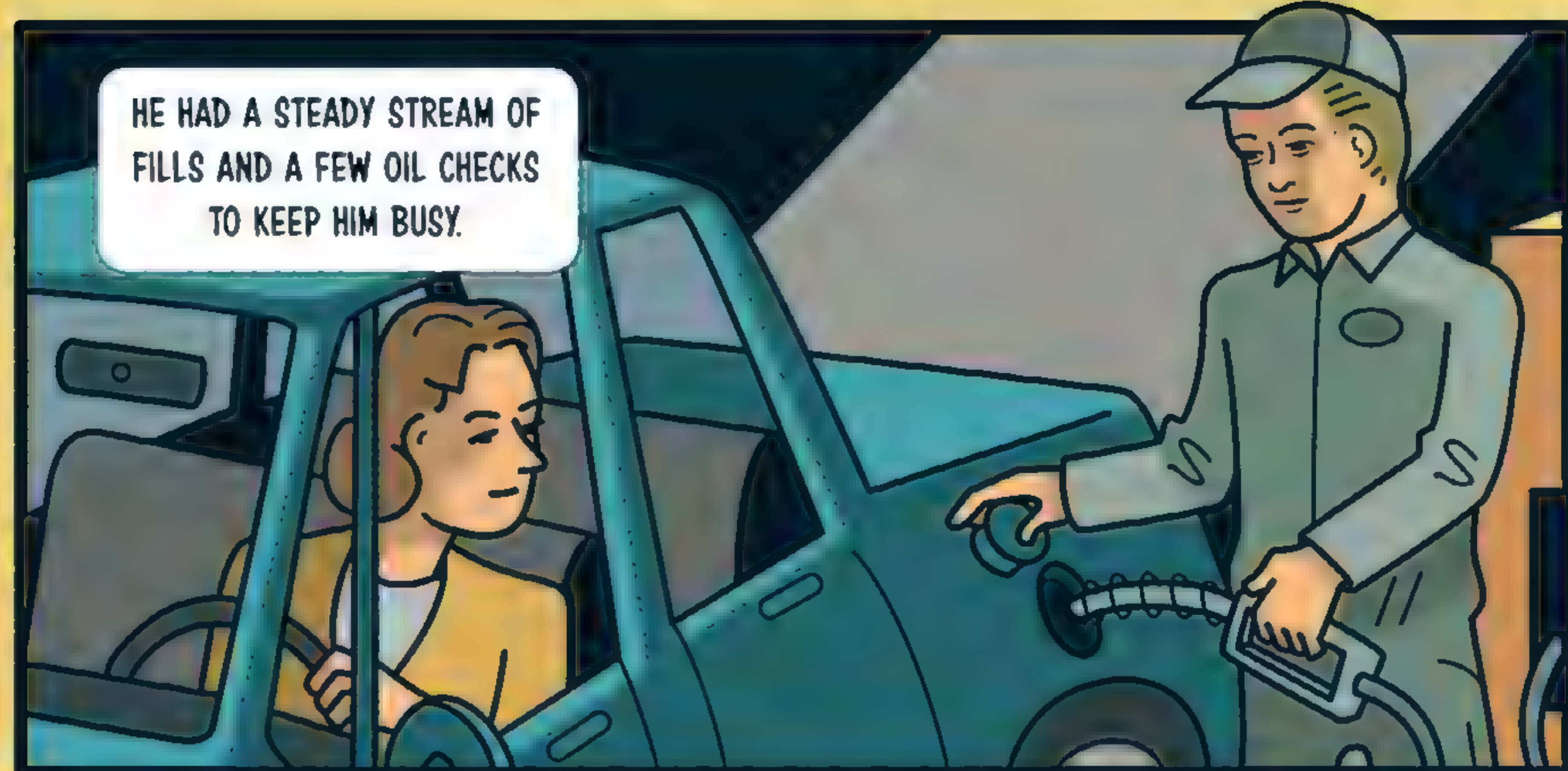
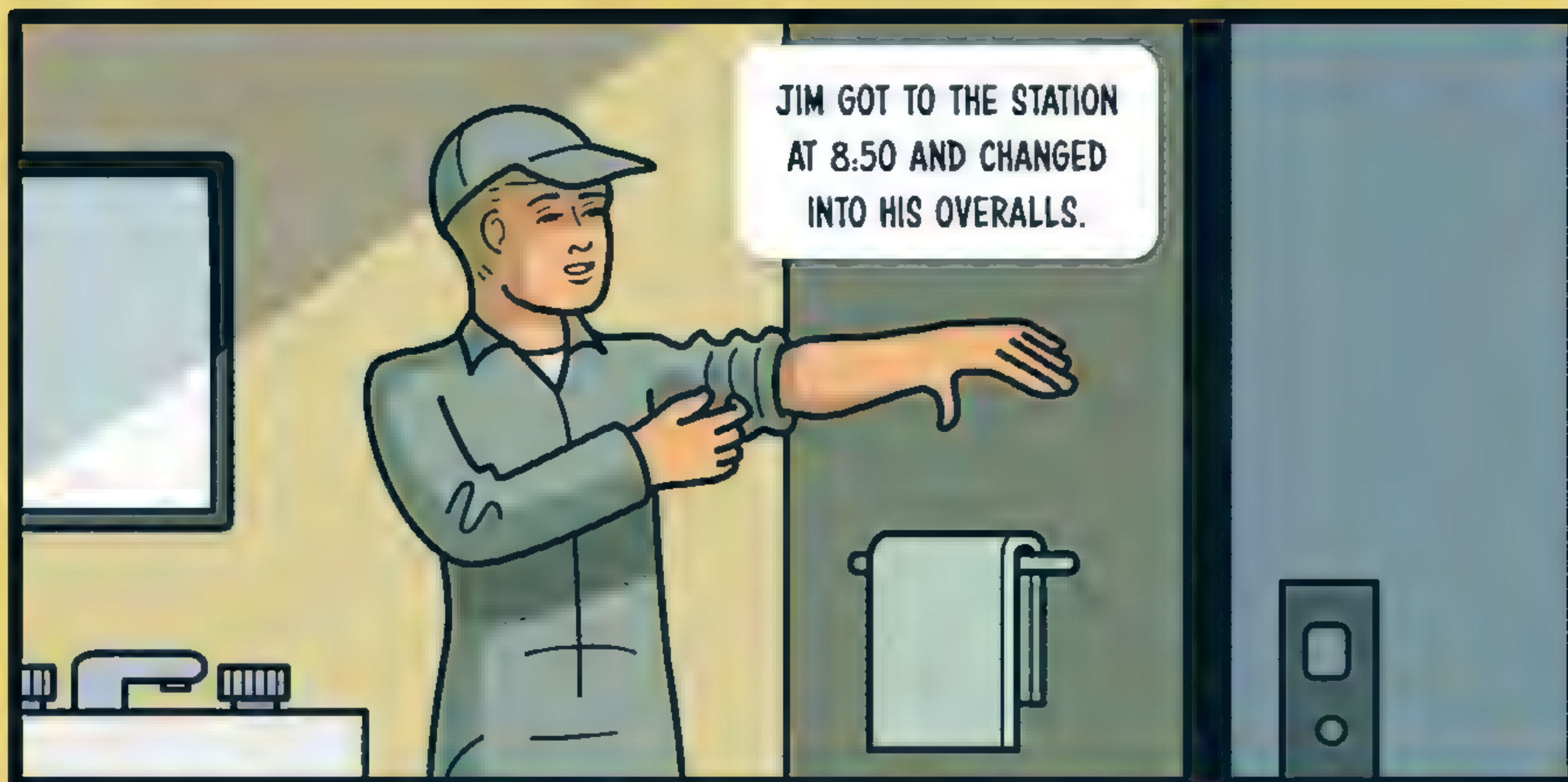
I'M HUNGRY,  
LET'S ORDER  
SOME DINNER.







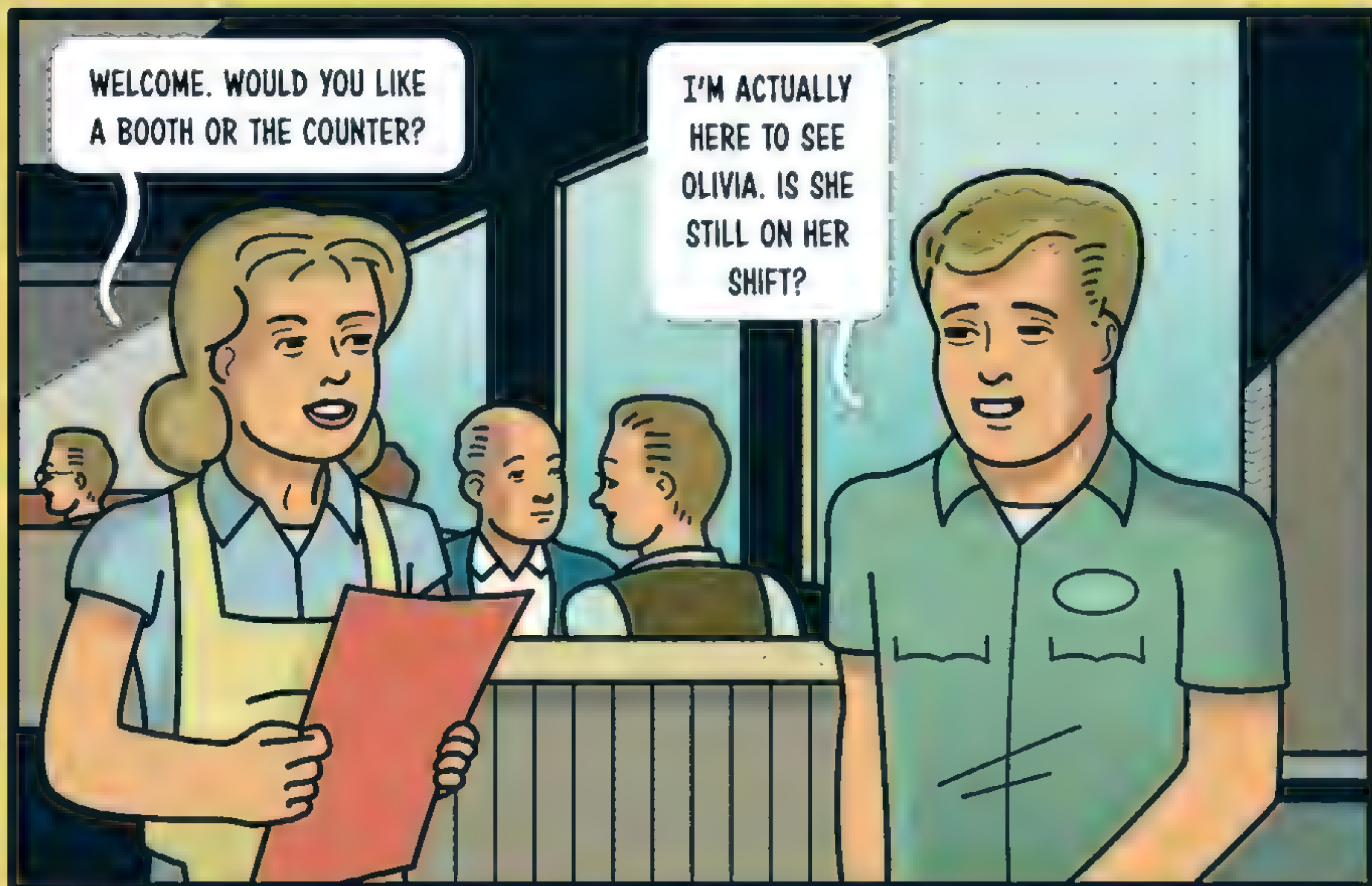






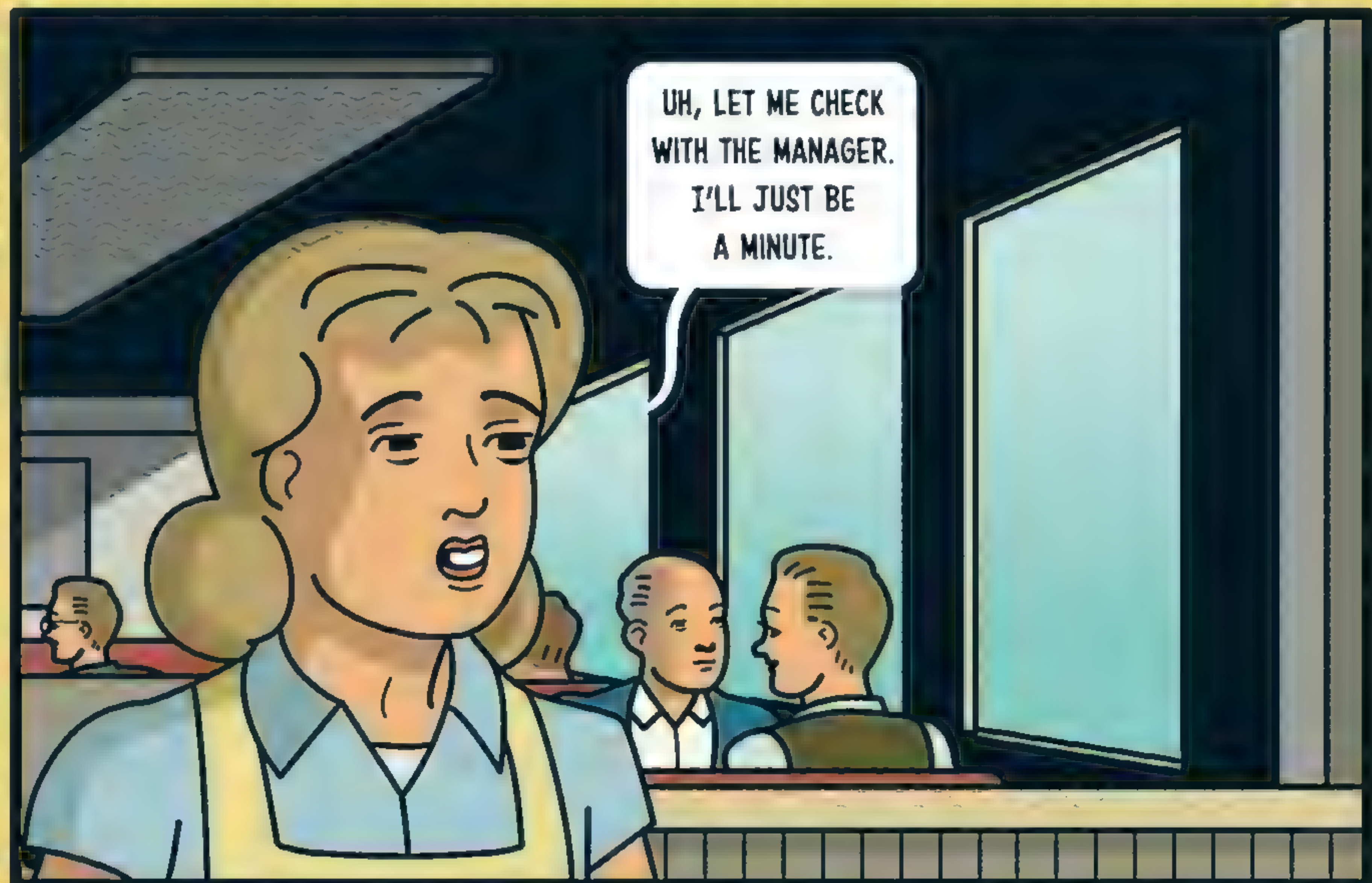


THE TWO MEN WATCHING HIM HAD LEFT HIM UNNERVED. HE DECIDED TO GO GET OLIVIA. THEY'D HEAD BACK TO THE MOTEL, PACK UP, AND LEAVE.



WELCOME. WOULD YOU LIKE A BOOTH OR THE COUNTER?

I'M ACTUALLY HERE TO SEE OLIVIA. IS SHE STILL ON HER SHIFT?



UH, LET ME CHECK WITH THE MANAGER. I'LL JUST BE A MINUTE.



YOU'RE LOOKING FOR OLIVIA?



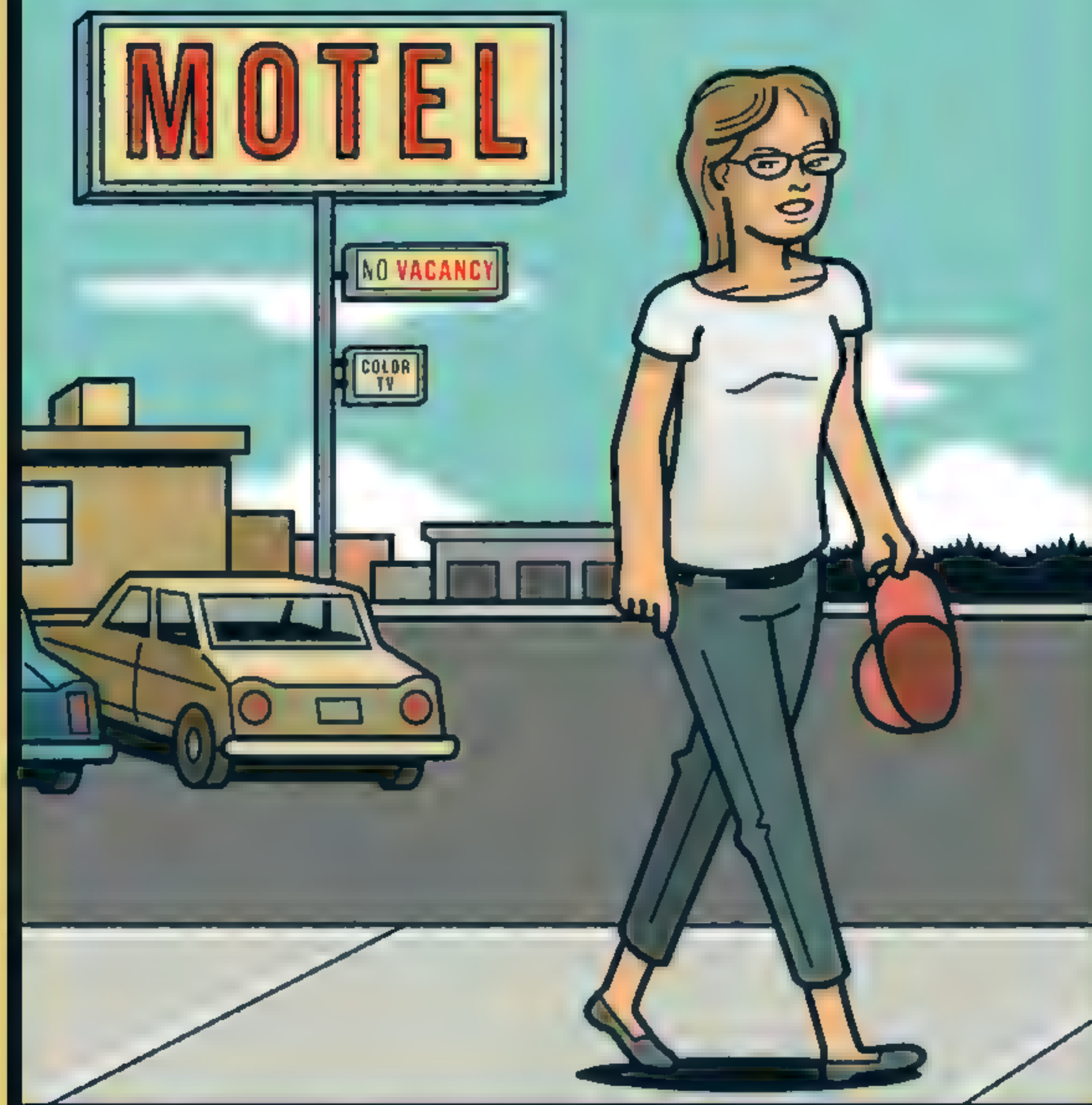
SO AM I. SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO START TODAY, BUT SHE NEVER SHOWED.



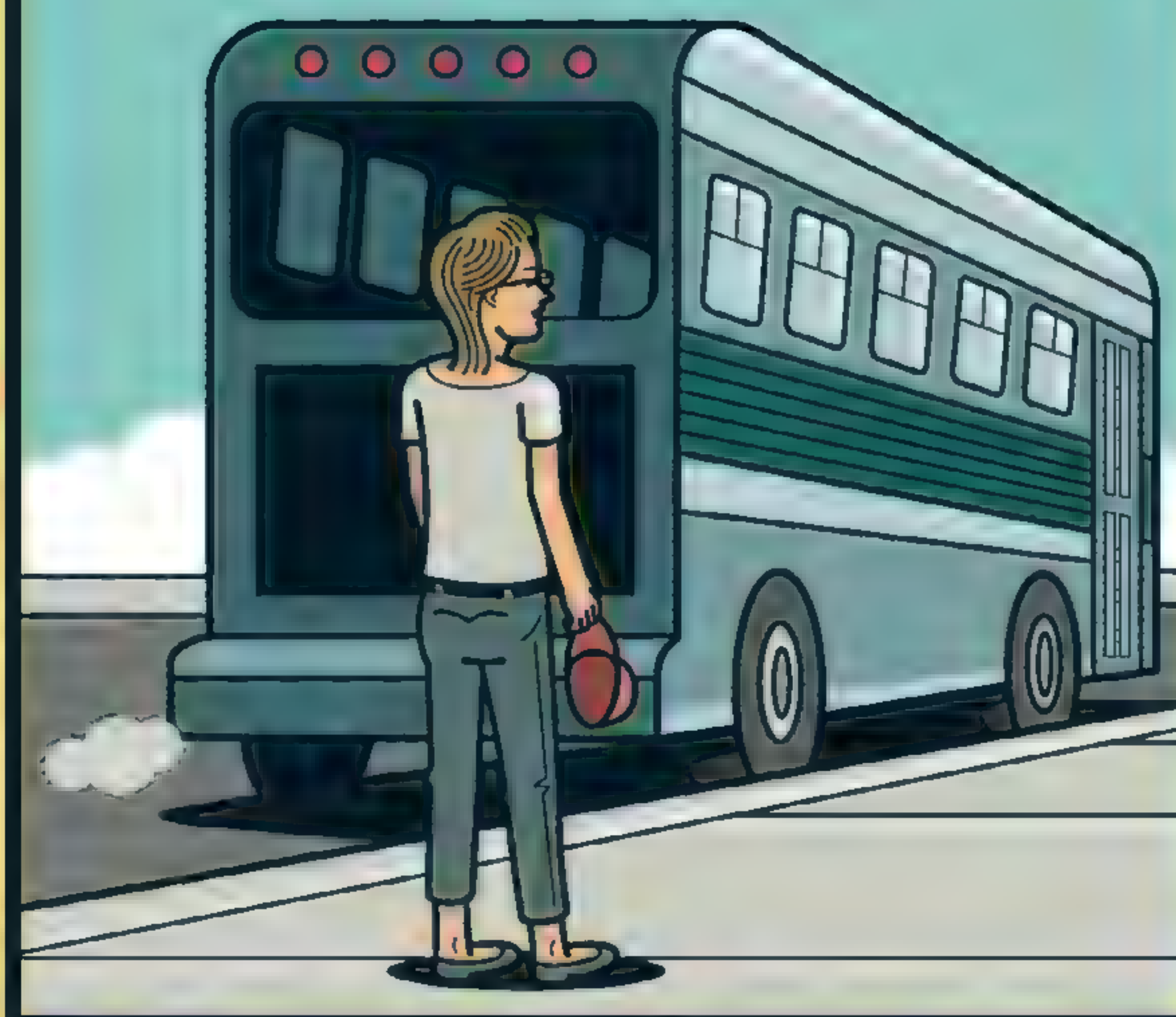
WHEN YOU FIND HER, TELL HER NOT TO BOTHER COMING BACK.



EARLIER THAT MORNING, OLIVIA HAD LEFT THE MOTEL INTENDING TO START HER NEW JOB...



...BUT WHEN THE 6 BUS HAD PULLED UP FIRST, SHE GOT ON.



WHEN SHE GOT OFF THE BUS, SHE PUT ON A BASEBALL CAP AND SUNGLASSES TO AVOID BEING RECOGNIZED.



IT WAS MIDMORNING AND THE STREETS WERE FAIRLY QUIET. UNTIL...



OLIVIA?



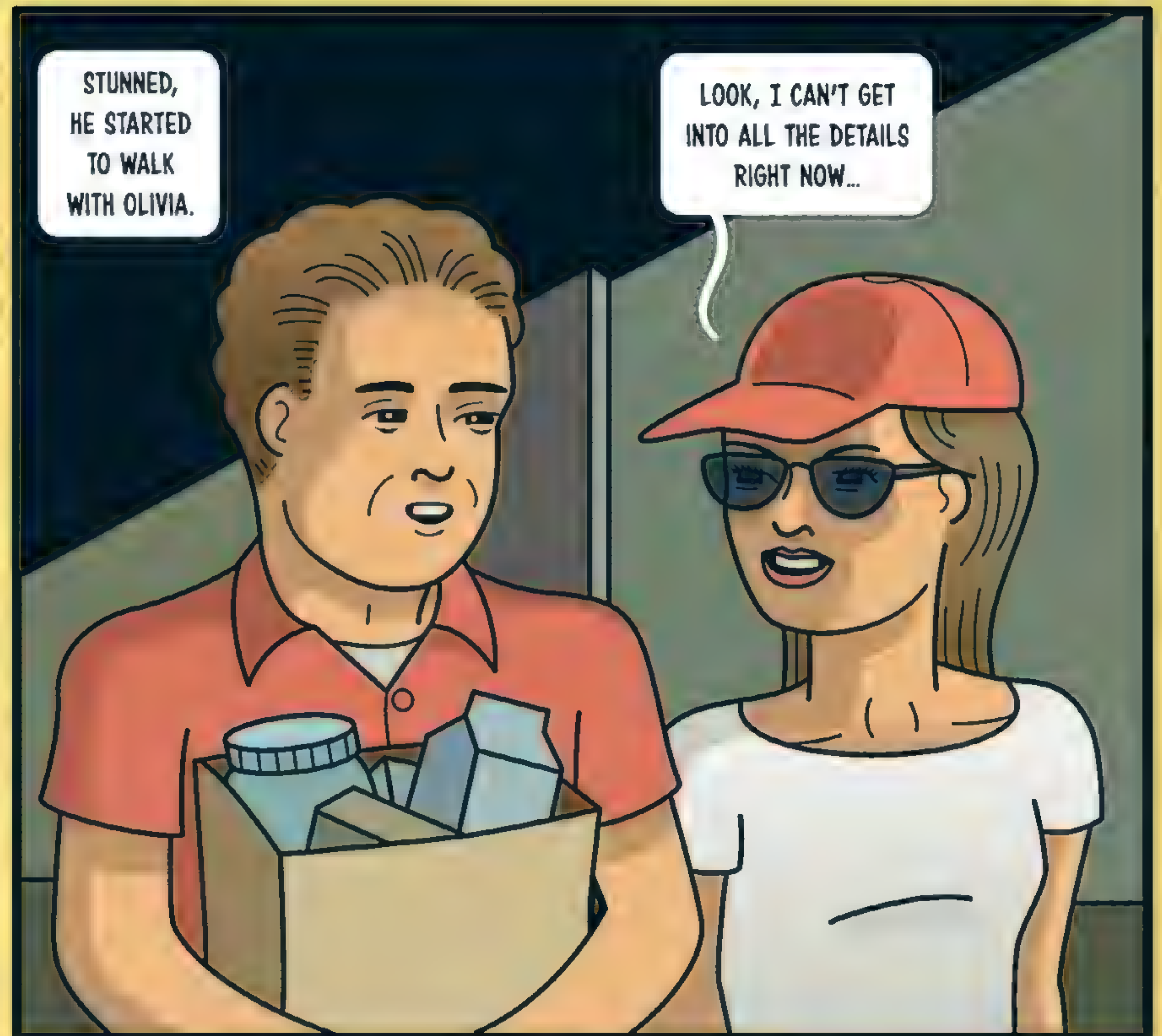
IT WAS HUGO. HE WAS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY OF THE CORNER MARKET, STARING AT HER.





HOW CAN YOU BE...?

SHHH, PEOPLE ARE STARING. FOLLOW ME, HUGO.



STUNNED, HE STARTED TO WALK WITH OLIVIA.

LOOK, I CAN'T GET INTO ALL THE DETAILS RIGHT NOW...



...PLUS, I'LL BE IN BIG TROUBLE IF THEY FIND OUT I TALKED TO YOU.

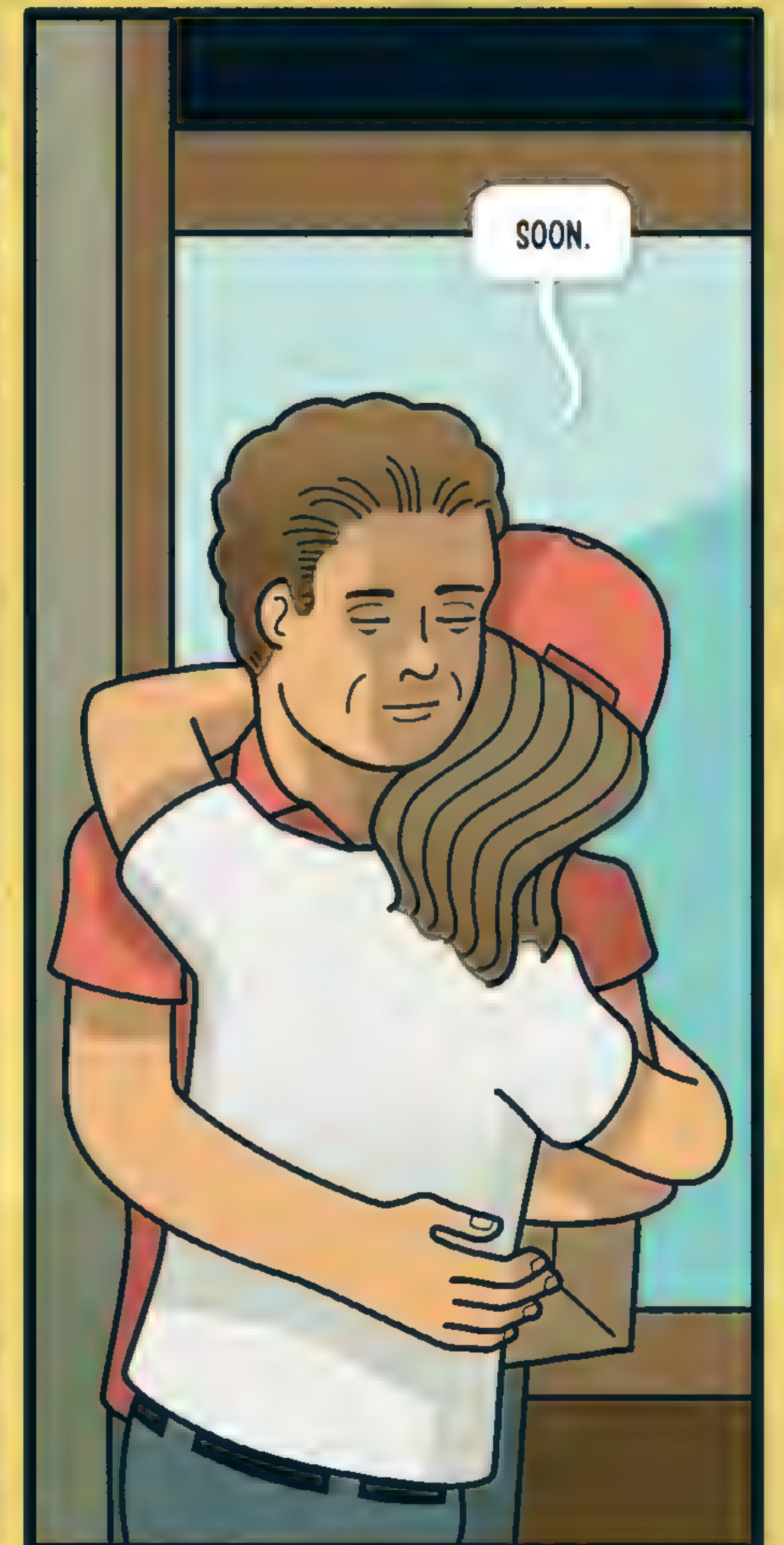
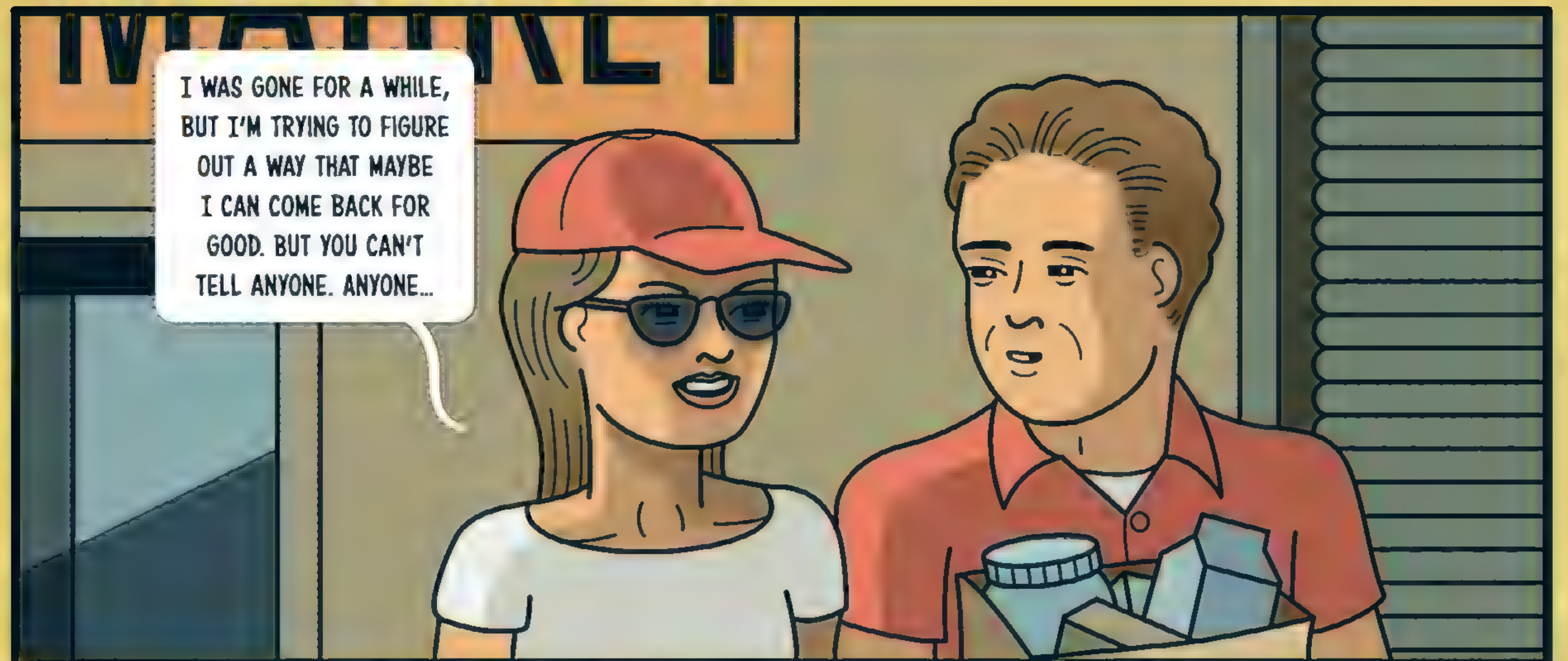


WHO ARE YOU GOING TO BE IN TROUBLE WITH? THE COPS? YOU'RE...DEAD.

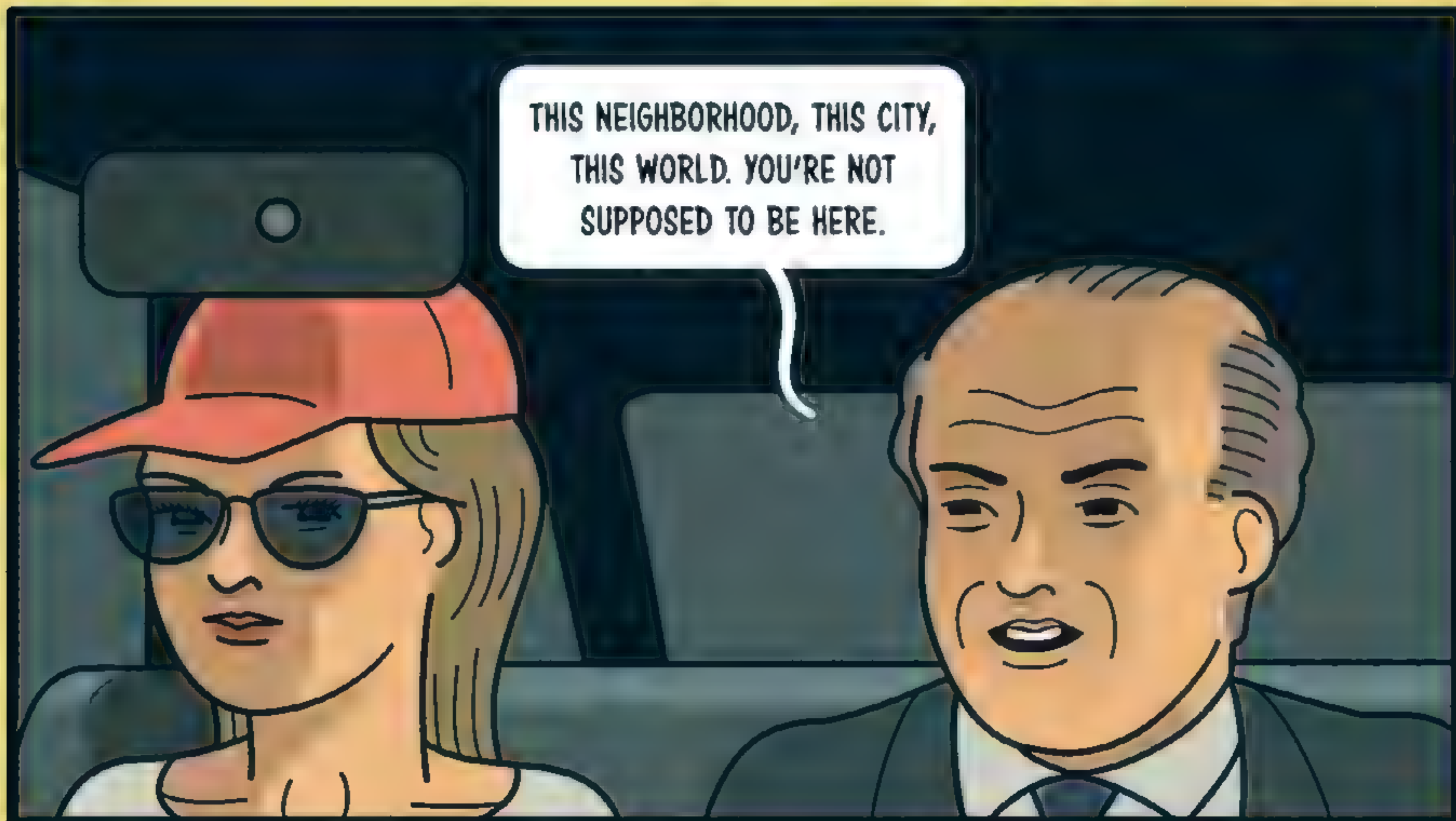
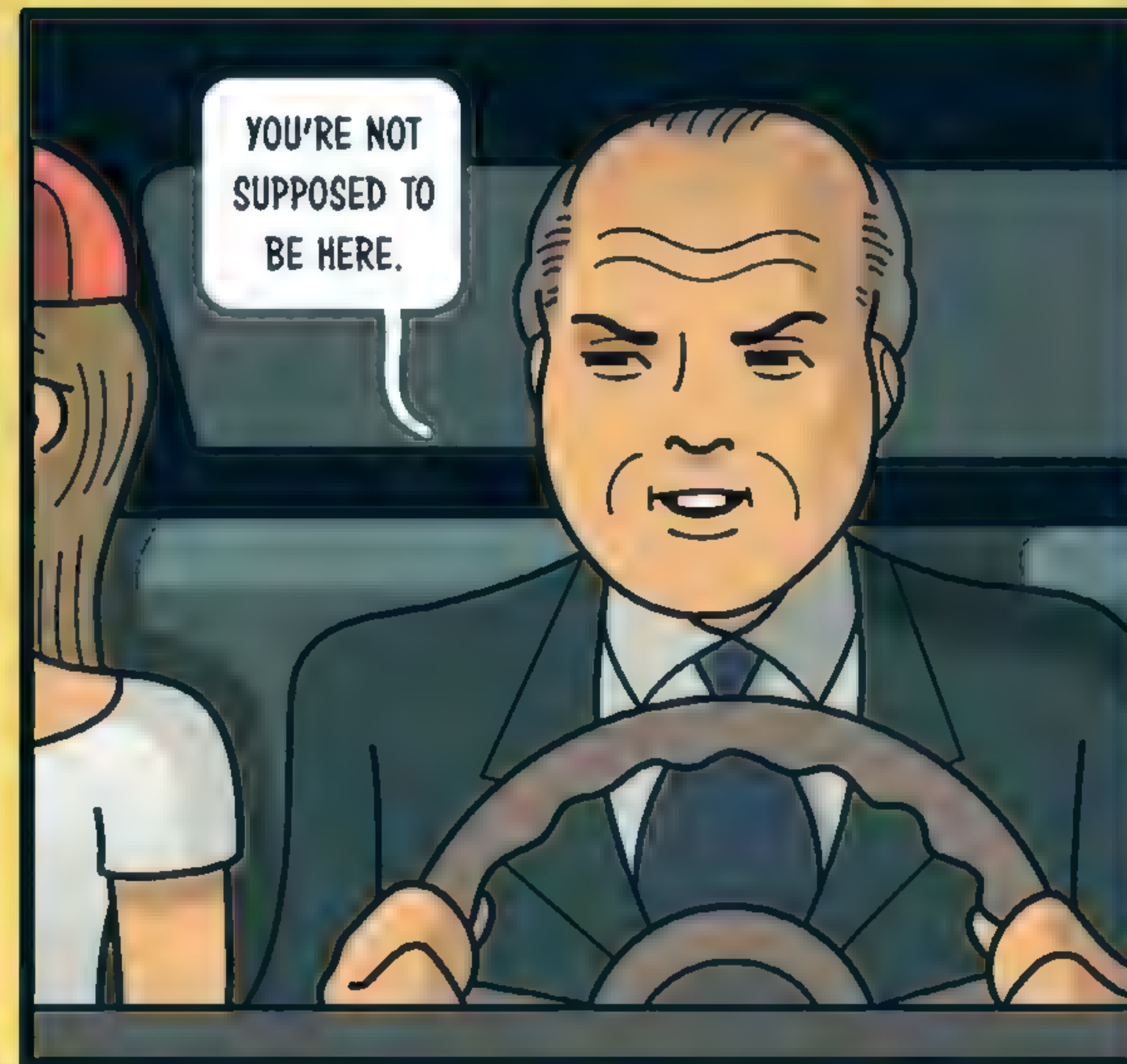
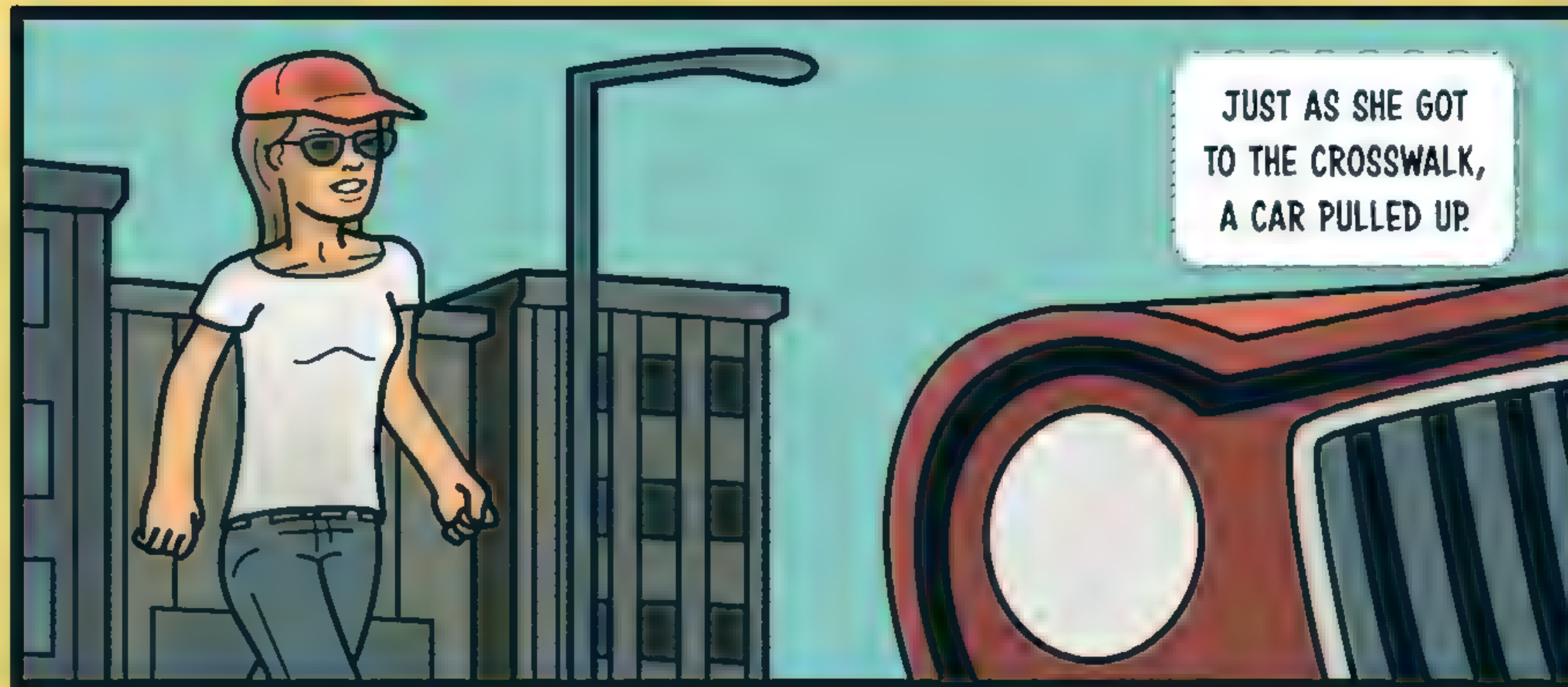


I SAW YOUR BODY AT THE FUNERAL HOME.

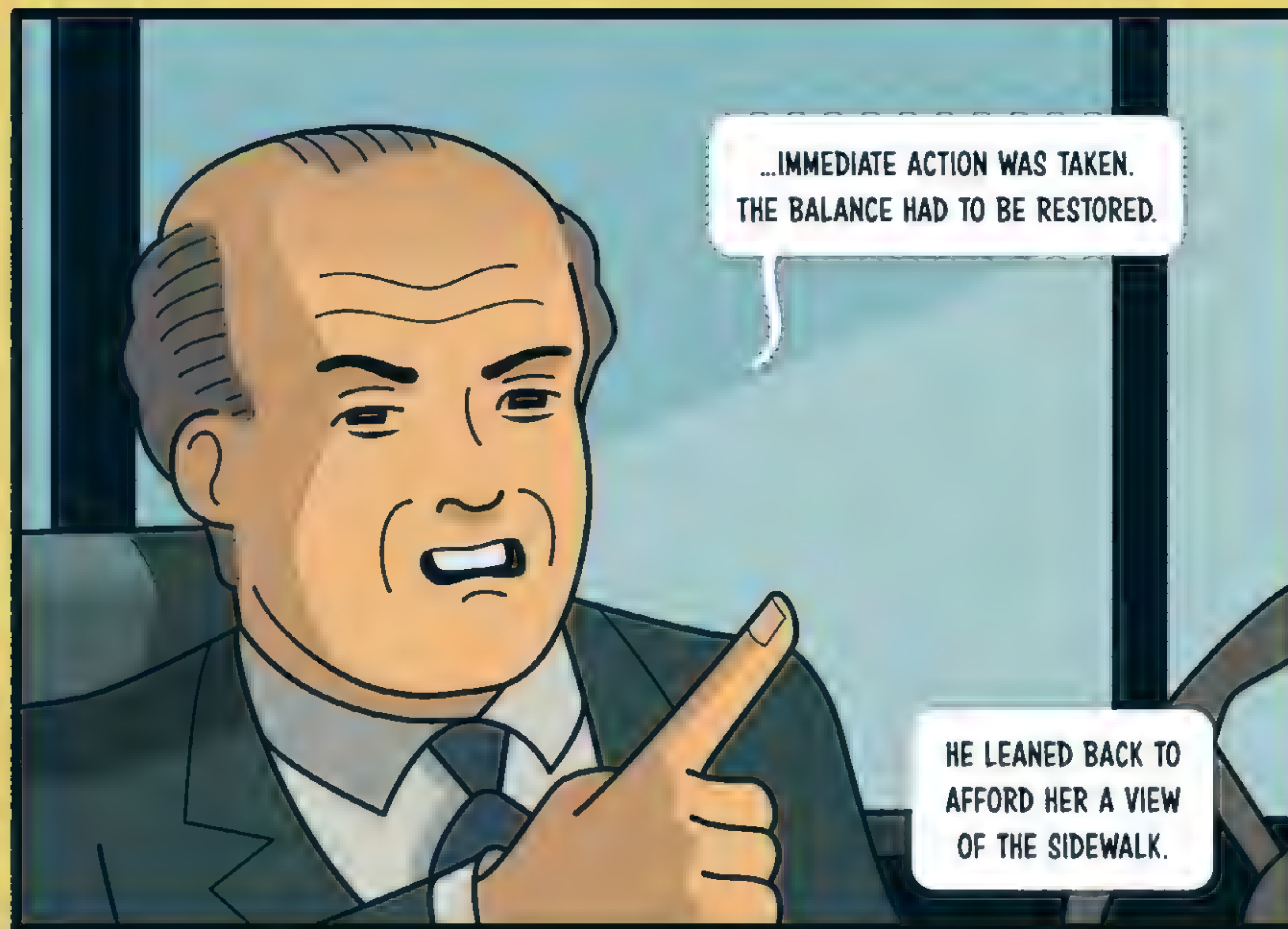










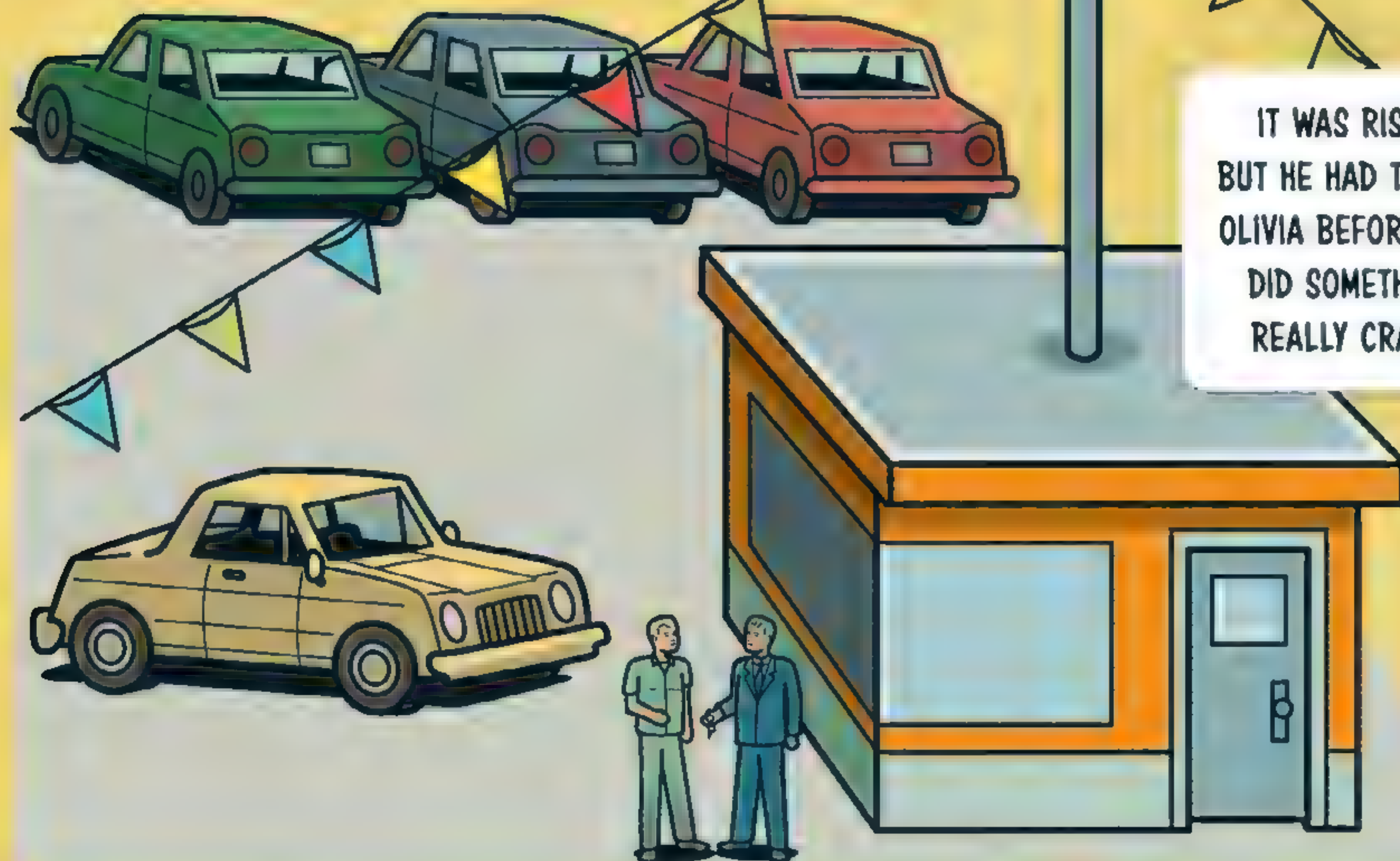




BEFORE GETTING BACK TO THE MOTEL, JIM PICKED UP A RENTAL AT THE LOT ACROSS THE STREET. HE USED JARVIS' LICENSE AS I.D. AND PAID IN CASH.

**A-1 AUTO RENTAL**

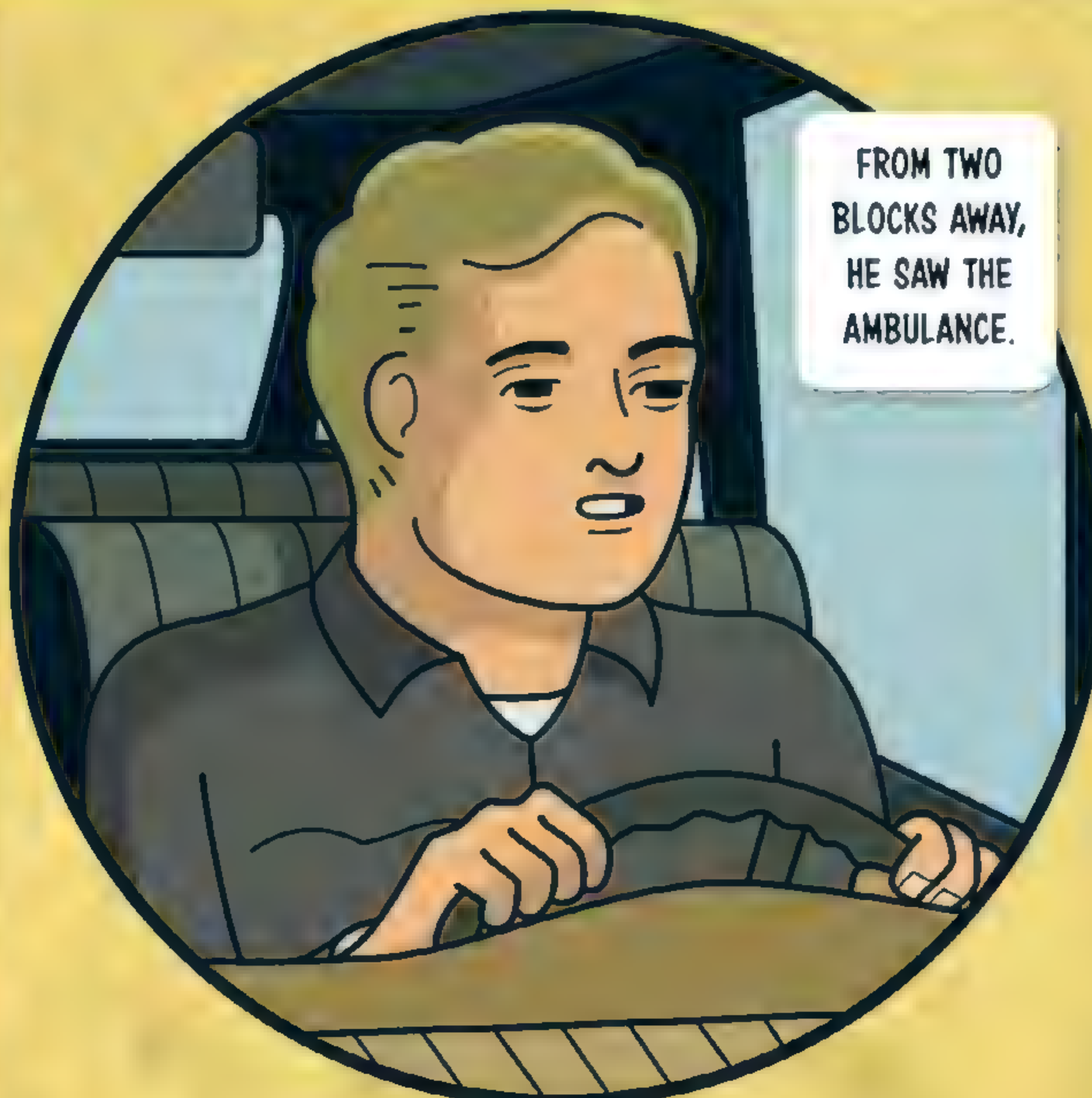
IT WAS RISKY, BUT HE HAD TO GET OLIVIA BEFORE SHE DID SOMETHING REALLY CRAZY.



HE PACKED UP EVERYTHING AT THE MOTEL AND TOOK OFF.



FROM TWO BLOCKS AWAY, HE SAW THE AMBULANCE.



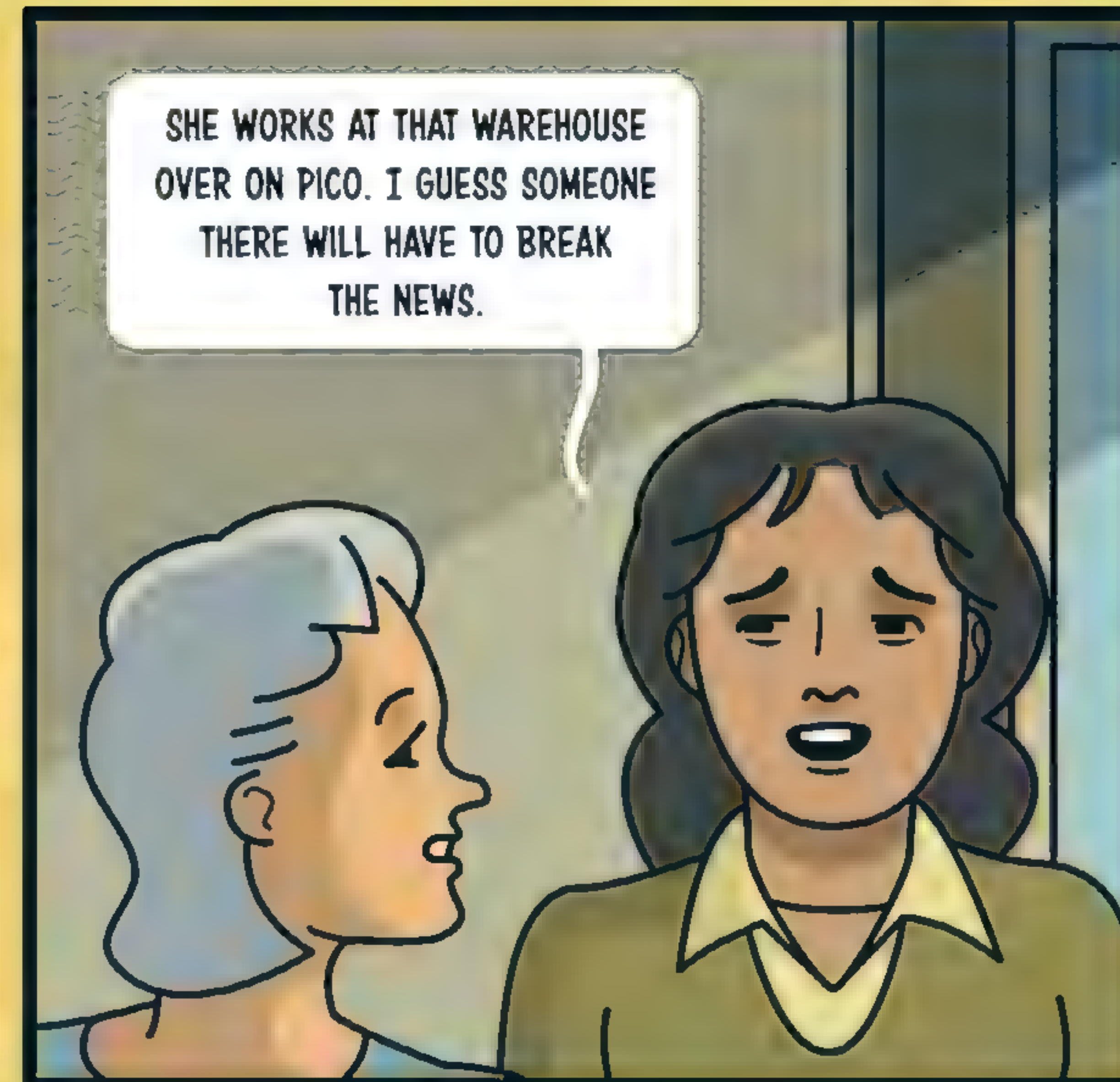




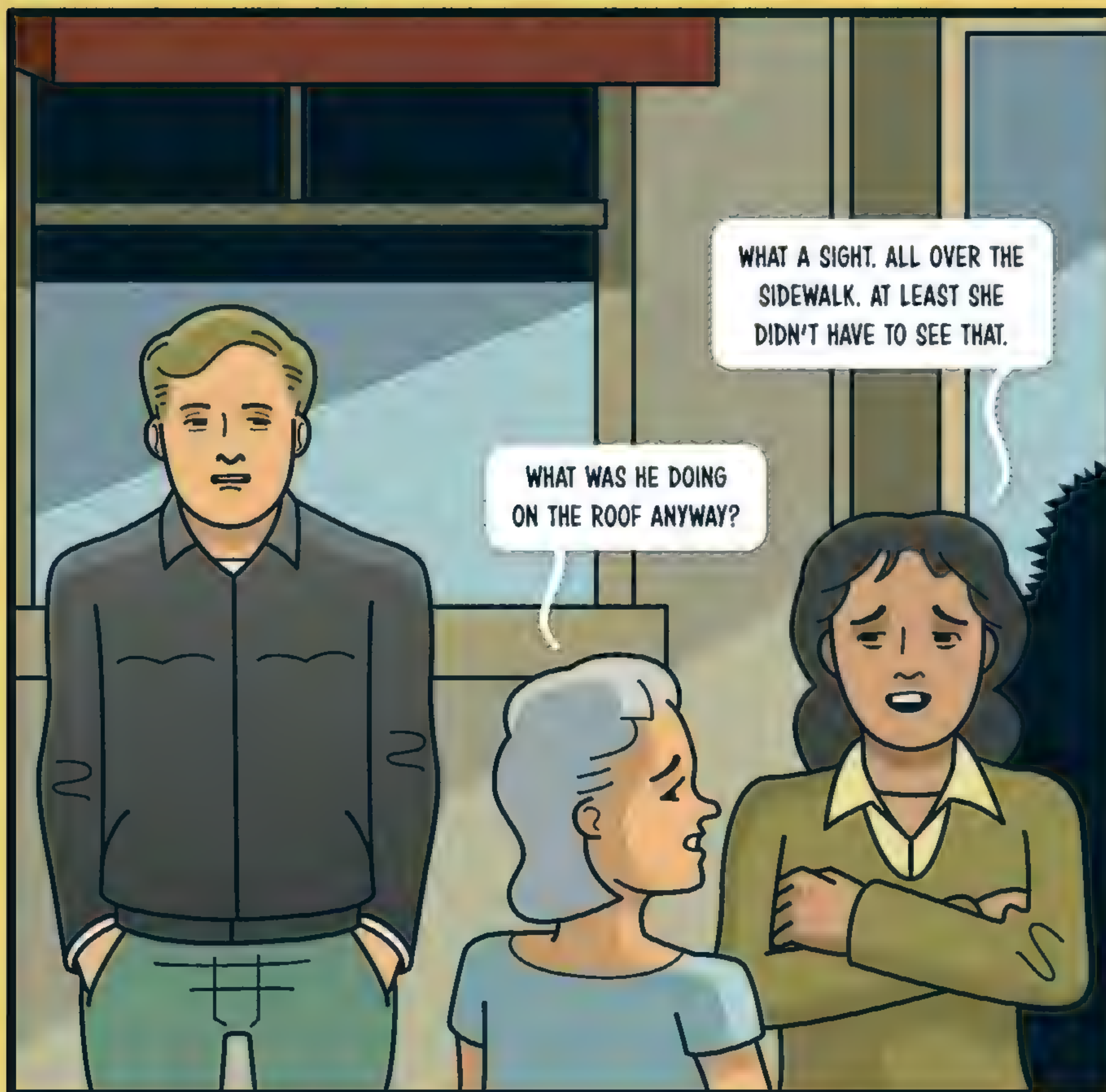
FIRST HER DAUGHTER,  
AND NOW HER SON. HAS  
ANYONE TOLD HER YET?

THAT  
POOR  
WOMAN.

A SMALL KNOT  
OF PEOPLE  
HAD GATHERED  
OUT FRONT.



SHE WORKS AT THAT WAREHOUSE  
OVER ON PICO. I GUESS SOMEONE  
THERE WILL HAVE TO BREAK  
THE NEWS.



WHAT A SIGHT. ALL OVER THE  
SIDEWALK. AT LEAST SHE  
DIDN'T HAVE TO SEE THAT.

WHAT WAS HE DOING  
ON THE ROOF ANYWAY?



JIM'S HEAD WAS SPINNING AS HE GOT BACK  
INTO THE CAR. HE HAD TO FIND OLIVIA BEFORE  
THEY TOOK HER BACK, AND HE HAD TO AVOID  
BEING TAKEN BACK HIMSELF. THEY MUST HAVE  
FIGURED OUT HE AND OLIVIA WERE TOGETHER.



THE ONLY WAY TO TRACK OLIVIA WAS THROUGH A MEDIUM. IF HE COULD FIND A RELIABLE ONE, THEY COULD TELL IF SHE WAS STILL ON THE LIVING SIDE. HE'D HAVE TO HURRY. SHE COULD ONLY CROSS OVER ONCE. IF THEY TOOK HER BACK, IT WOULD BE FOREVER.



FIRST HE PULLED UP TO A DRIVE-THRU. HE WAS STARVING...



...FROM HIS CAR, HE SPOTTED WHAT HE NEEDED NEXT.



THERE WERE THREE SPIRITUALISTS LISTED IN EL MONTE AND POMONA. HE MADE A U-TURN AT THE INTERSECTION AND HEADED EAST.



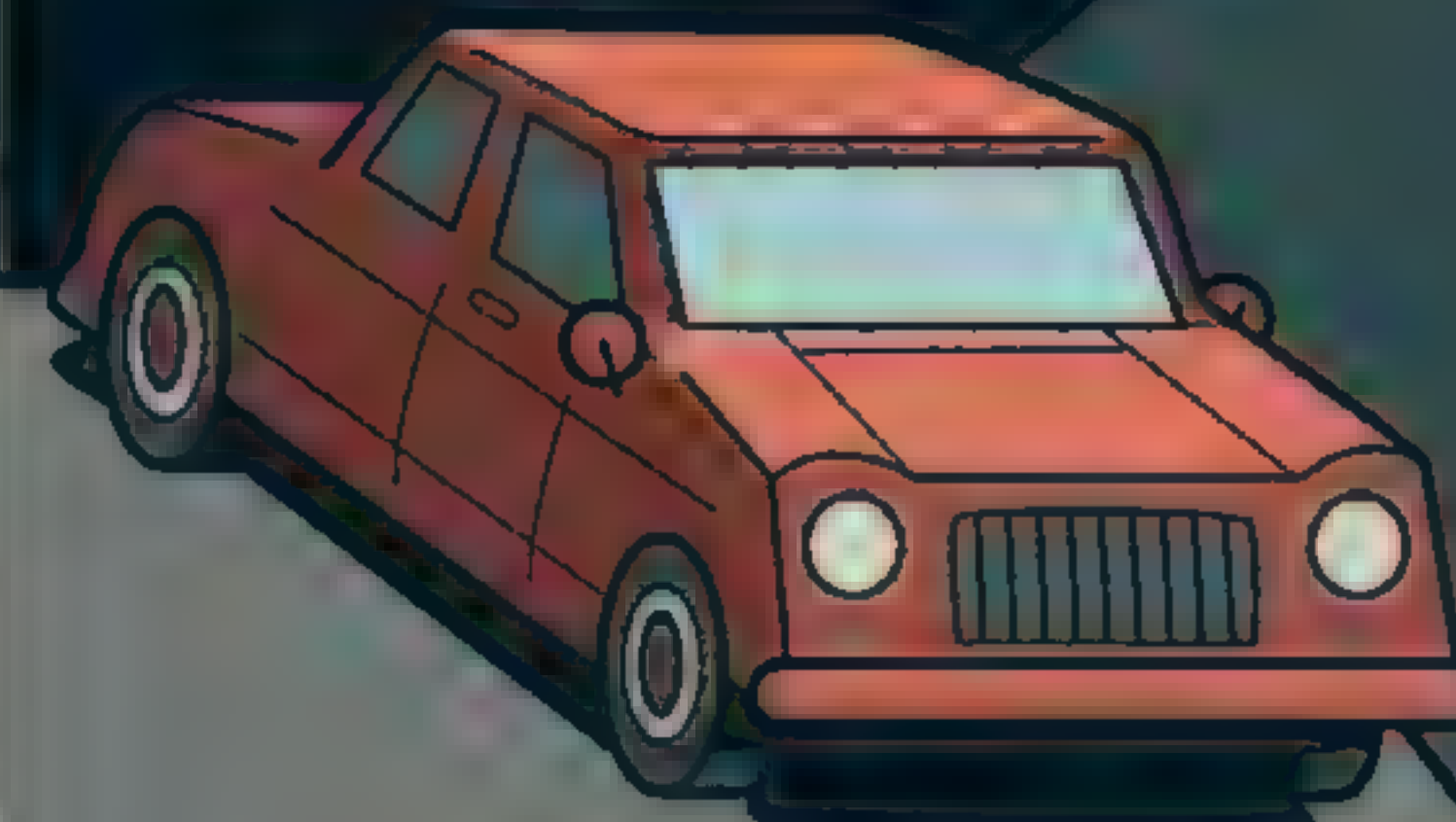


# PARK

## CHAPTER

# 21

AFTER BARRELING DOWN A BUNCH OF SIDE STREETS, THE P.O. TURNED THE CAR INTO AN UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE.



YOU SEE, IT'S NOT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO STAY HERE... BUT THERE IS ONE MORE THING YOU CAN DO BEFORE YOU GO BACK... YOU CAN HELP US BRING BACK JIM.

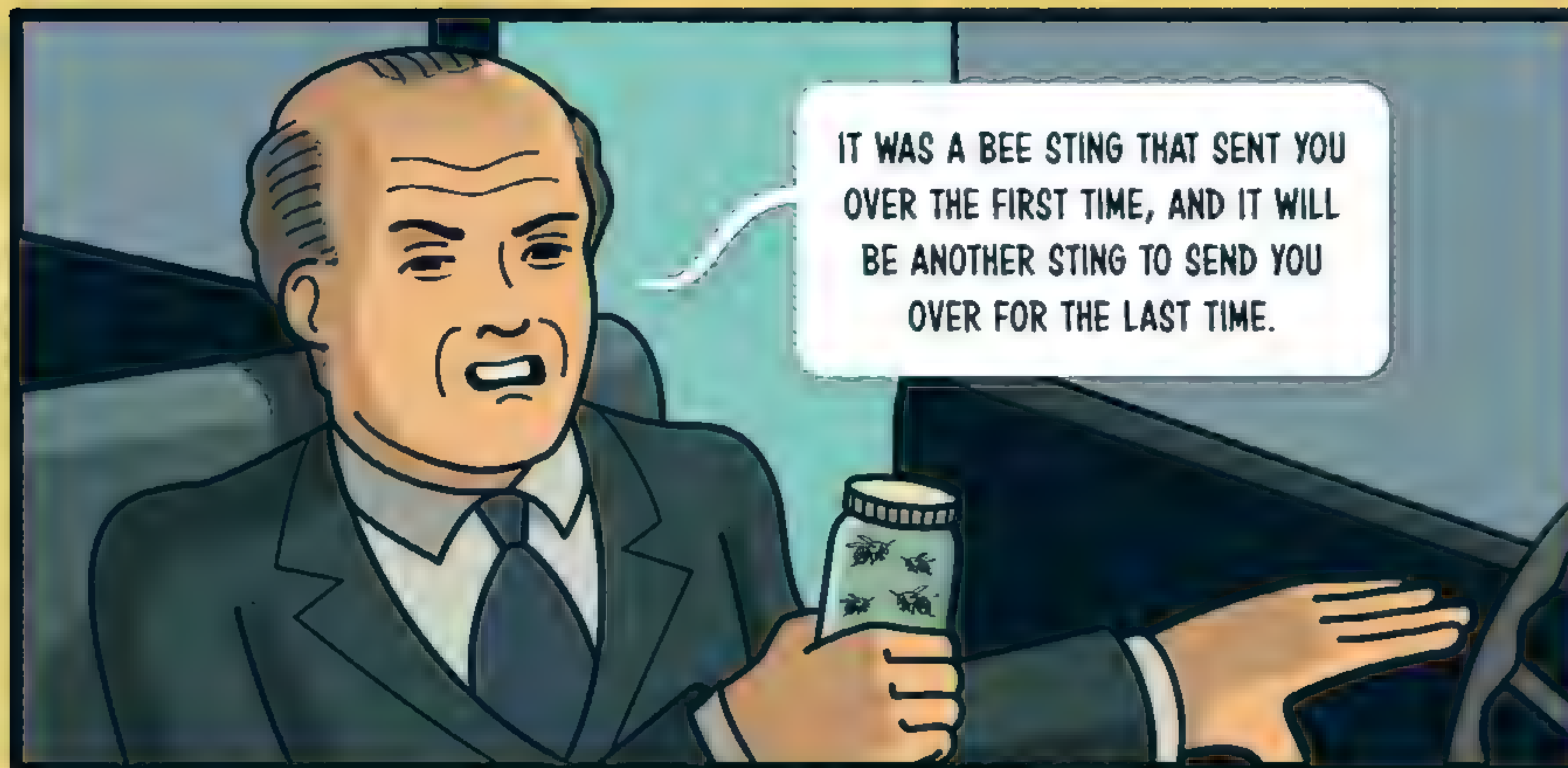
HE'S A CONNECTOR. IF HE'S LEFT TO HIS OWN DEVICES, HE COULD GO BACK AND FORTH, CAUSING ALL SORTS OF TROUBLE AND UPSETTING THE BALANCE...

...BUT *RESETTING* THIS BALANCE WILL KEEP ME OUT OF A JAR... UNLIKE MY FORMER PARTNER. SPEAKING OF JARS...

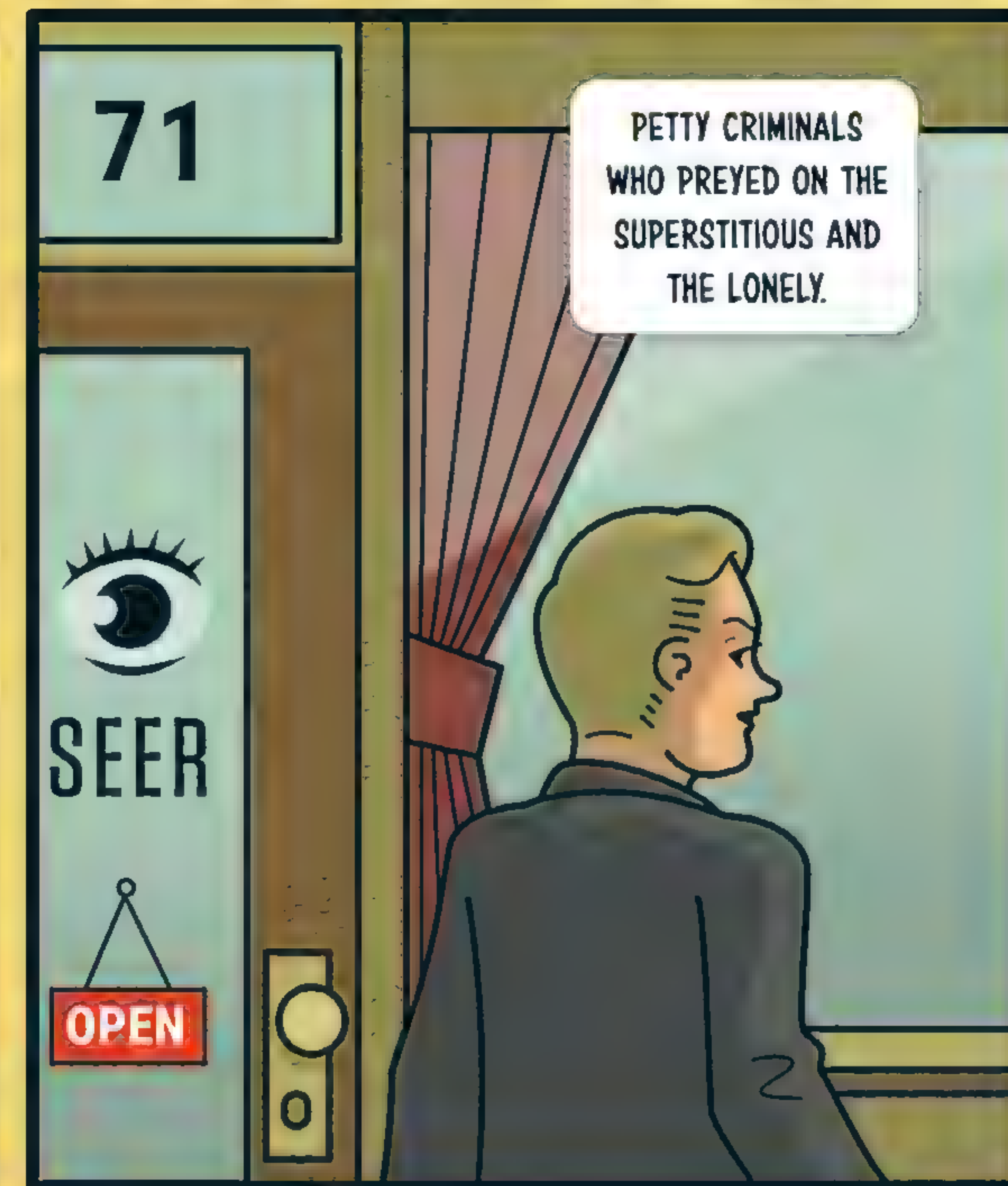
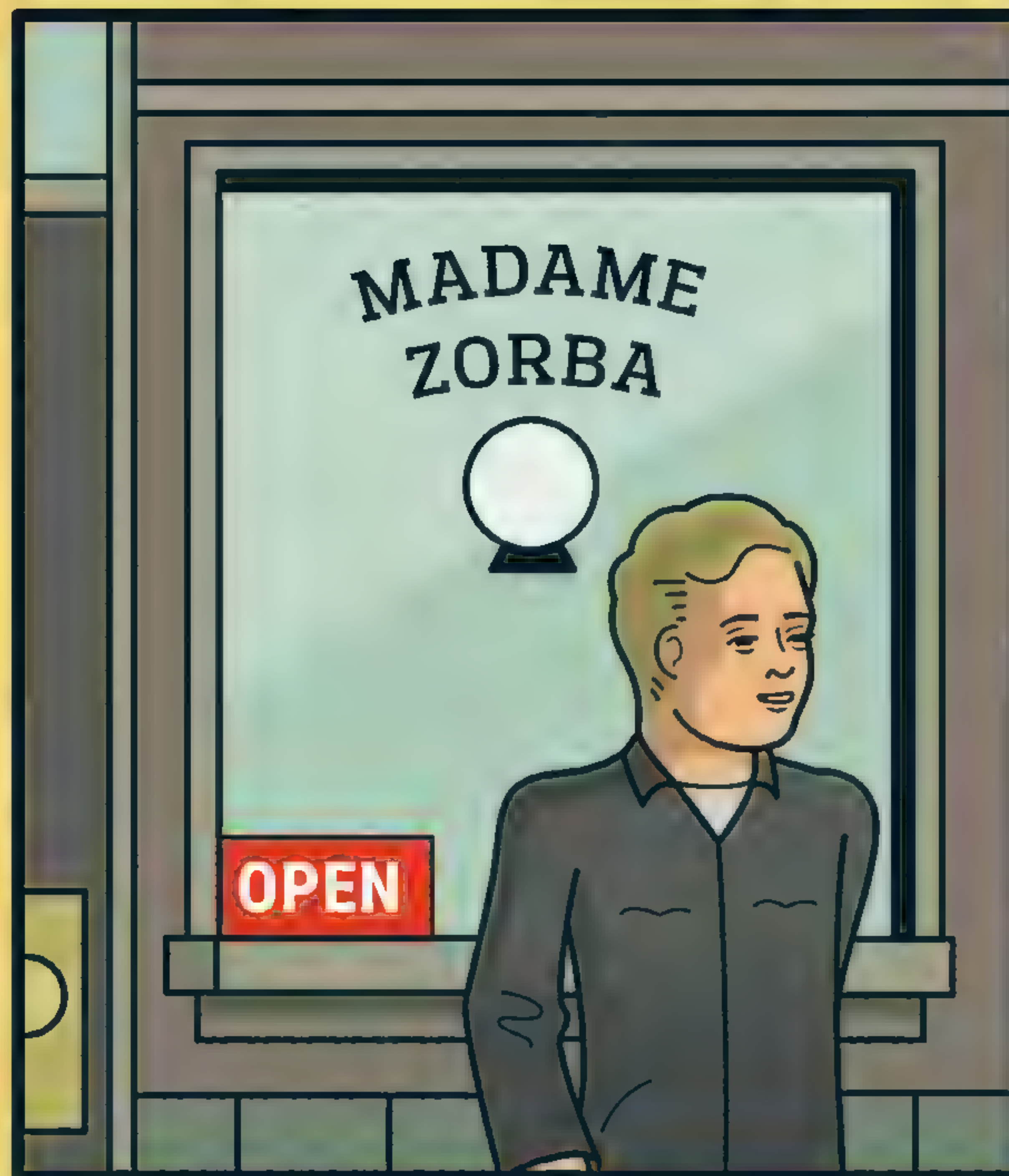
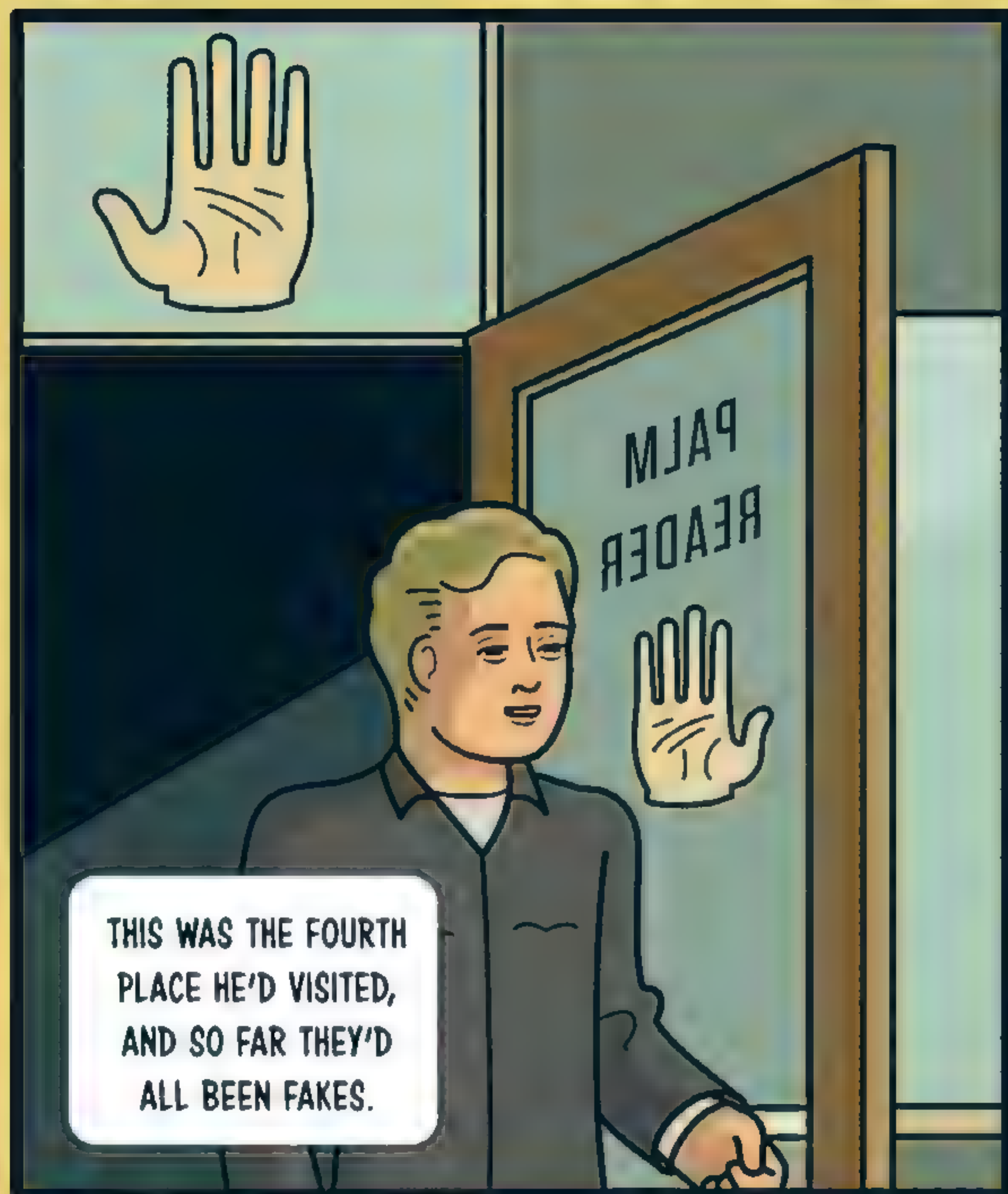
LEANING OVER, HE POPPED THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT AND TOOK OUT A GLASS JAR. TWENTY OR SO BEES BUZZED AROUND INSIDE.







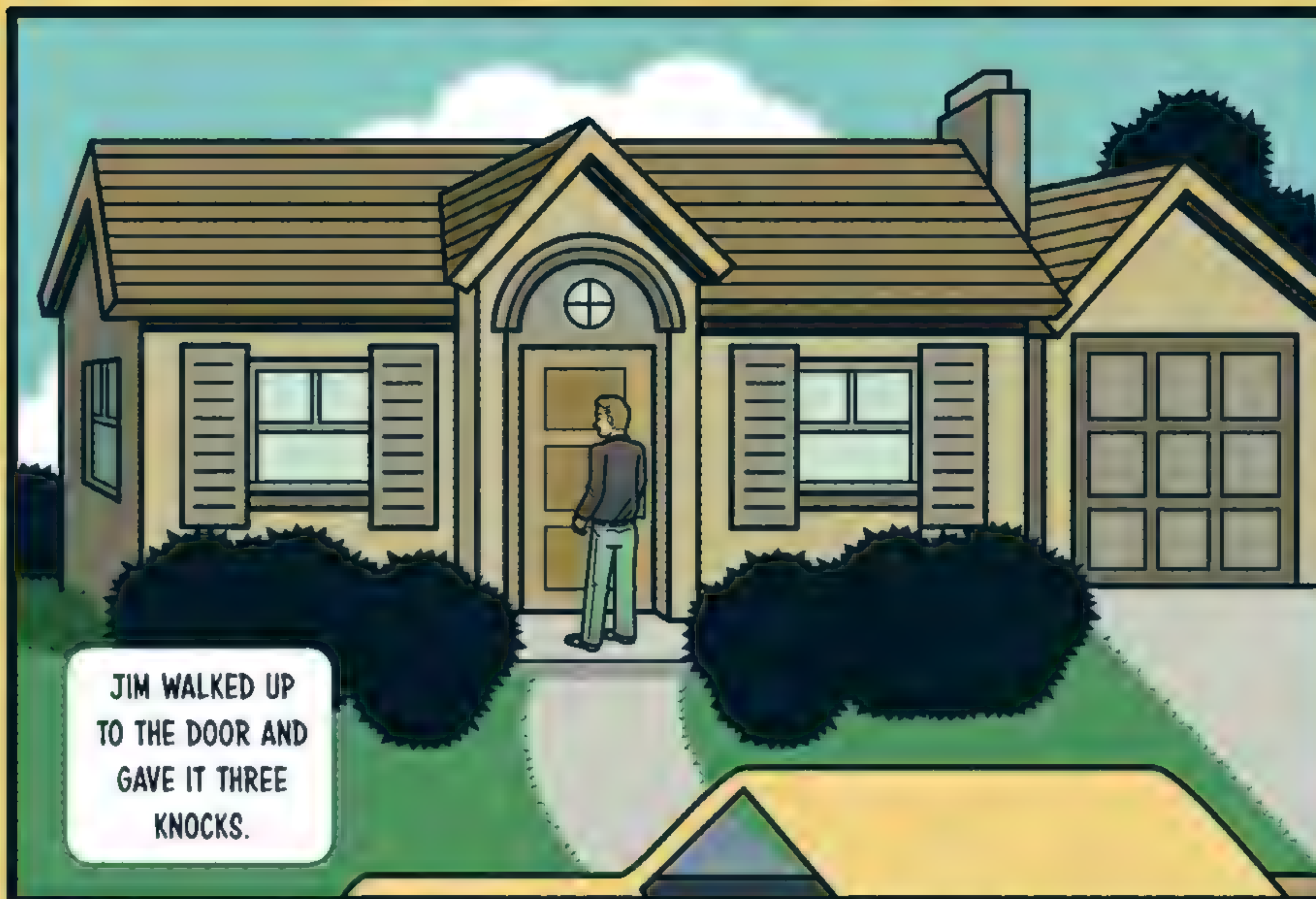








THE NEXT ONE WAS  
FIVE BLOCKS OVER  
ON EAST MISSION.



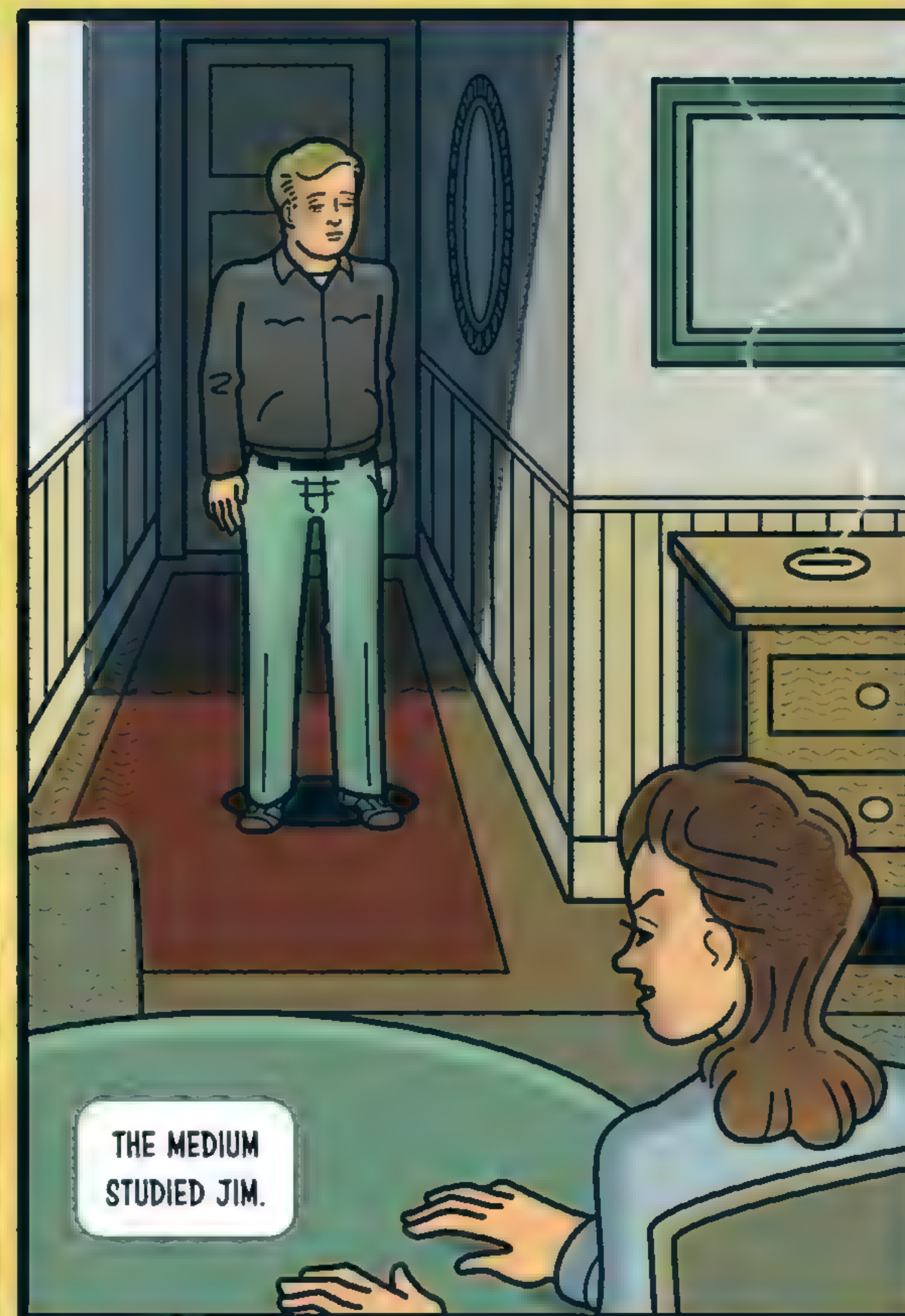
JIM WALKED UP  
TO THE DOOR AND  
GAVE IT THREE  
KNOCKS.



DON'T USUALLY GET FOLKS COMING BY  
ON MONDAYS, SO EXCUSE THE MESS.  
PLEASE, COME INTO THE STUDY.

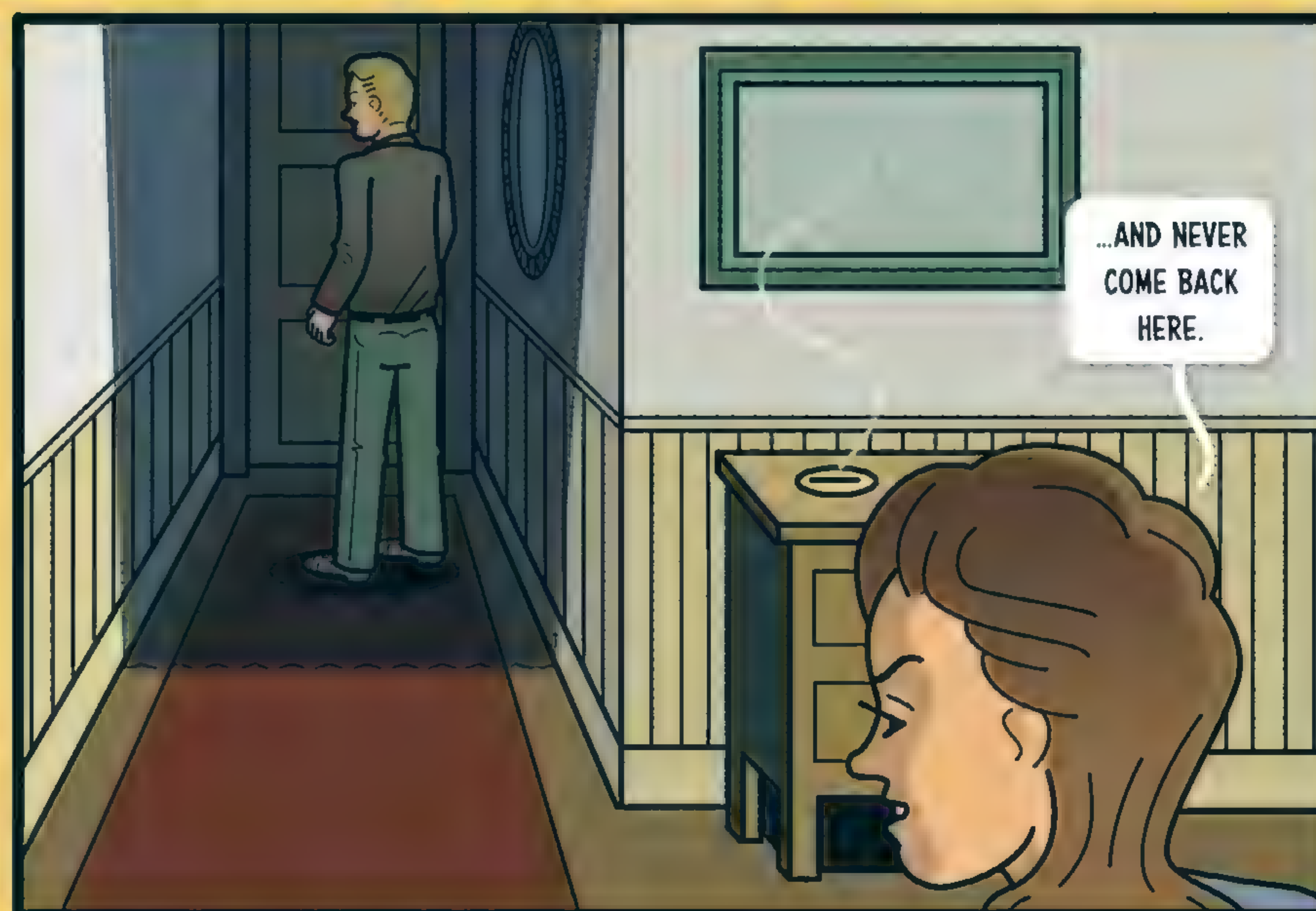


THE SMOKE OF  
SANDALWOOD  
INCENSE HUNG  
IN THE AIR.

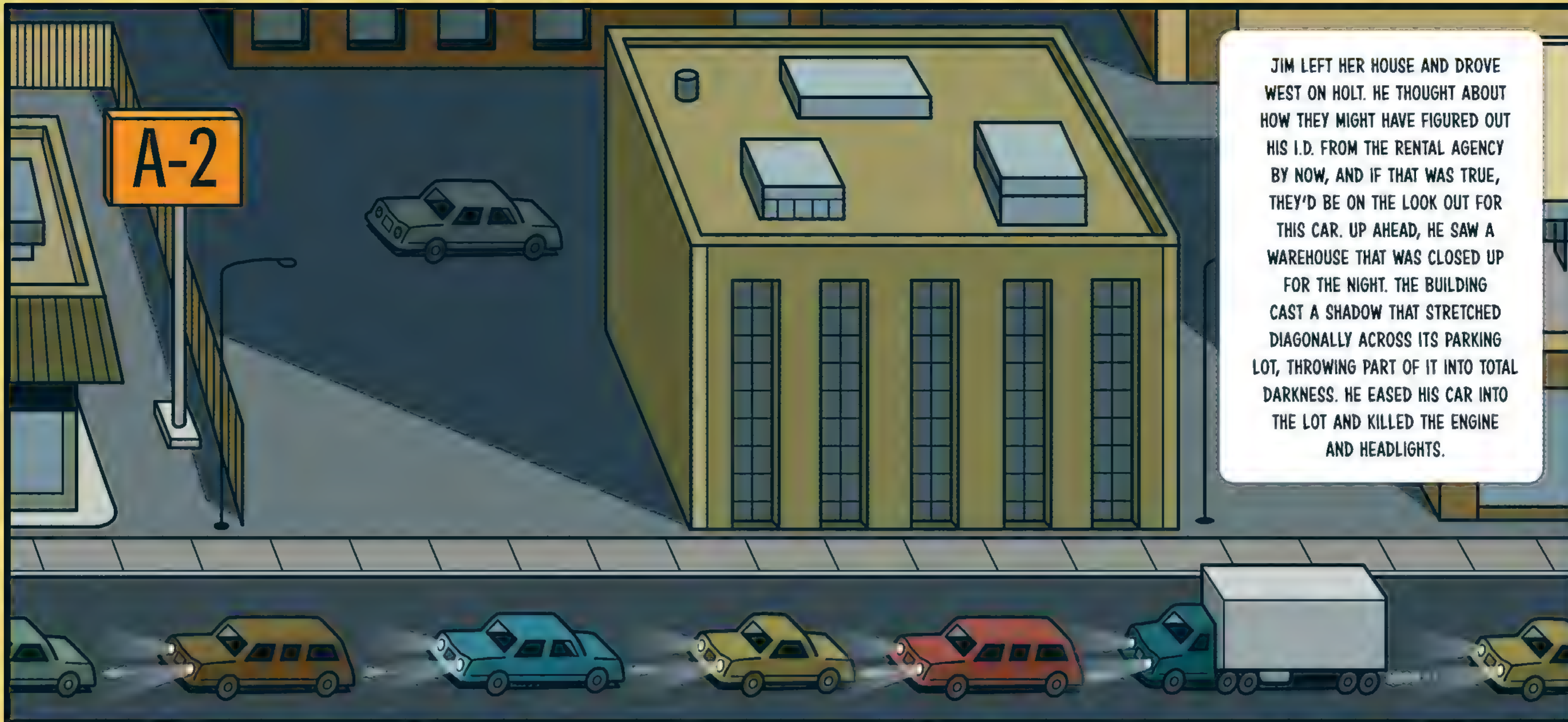


THE MEDIUM  
STUDIED JIM.





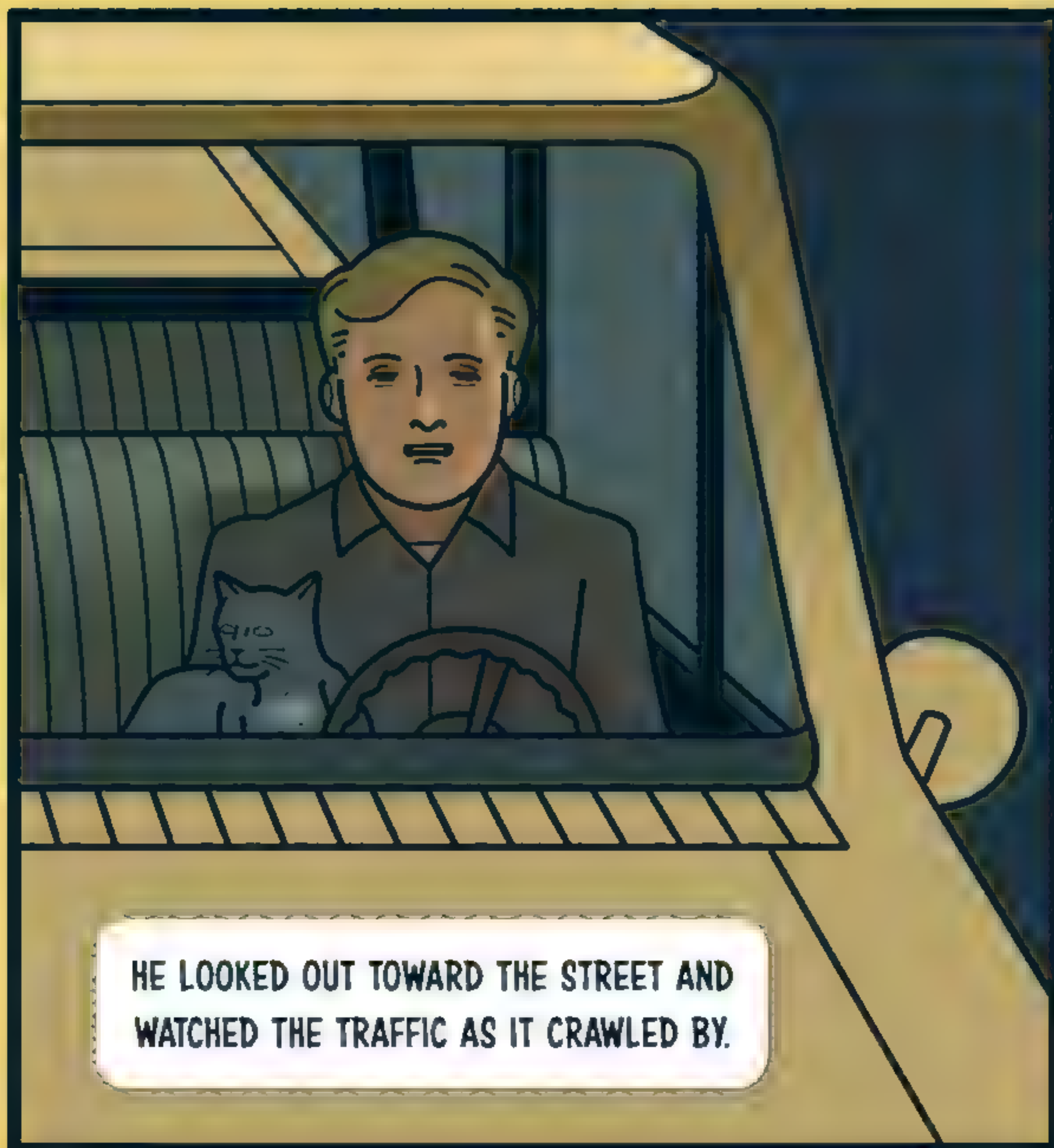




JIM LEFT HER HOUSE AND DROVE WEST ON HOLT. HE THOUGHT ABOUT HOW THEY MIGHT HAVE FIGURED OUT HIS I.D. FROM THE RENTAL AGENCY BY NOW, AND IF THAT WAS TRUE, THEY'D BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR THIS CAR. UP AHEAD, HE SAW A WAREHOUSE THAT WAS CLOSED UP FOR THE NIGHT. THE BUILDING CAST A SHADOW THAT STRETCHED DIAGONALLY ACROSS ITS PARKING LOT, THROWING PART OF IT INTO TOTAL DARKNESS. HE EASED HIS CAR INTO THE LOT AND KILLED THE ENGINE AND HEADLIGHTS.



HE RUBBED BEHIND LUNA'S EARS, AND SHE PURRED IN HIS LAP.



HE LOOKED OUT TOWARD THE STREET AND WATCHED THE TRAFFIC AS IT CRAWLED BY.



THAT WAS WHEN HE AND LUNA CROSSED OVER.

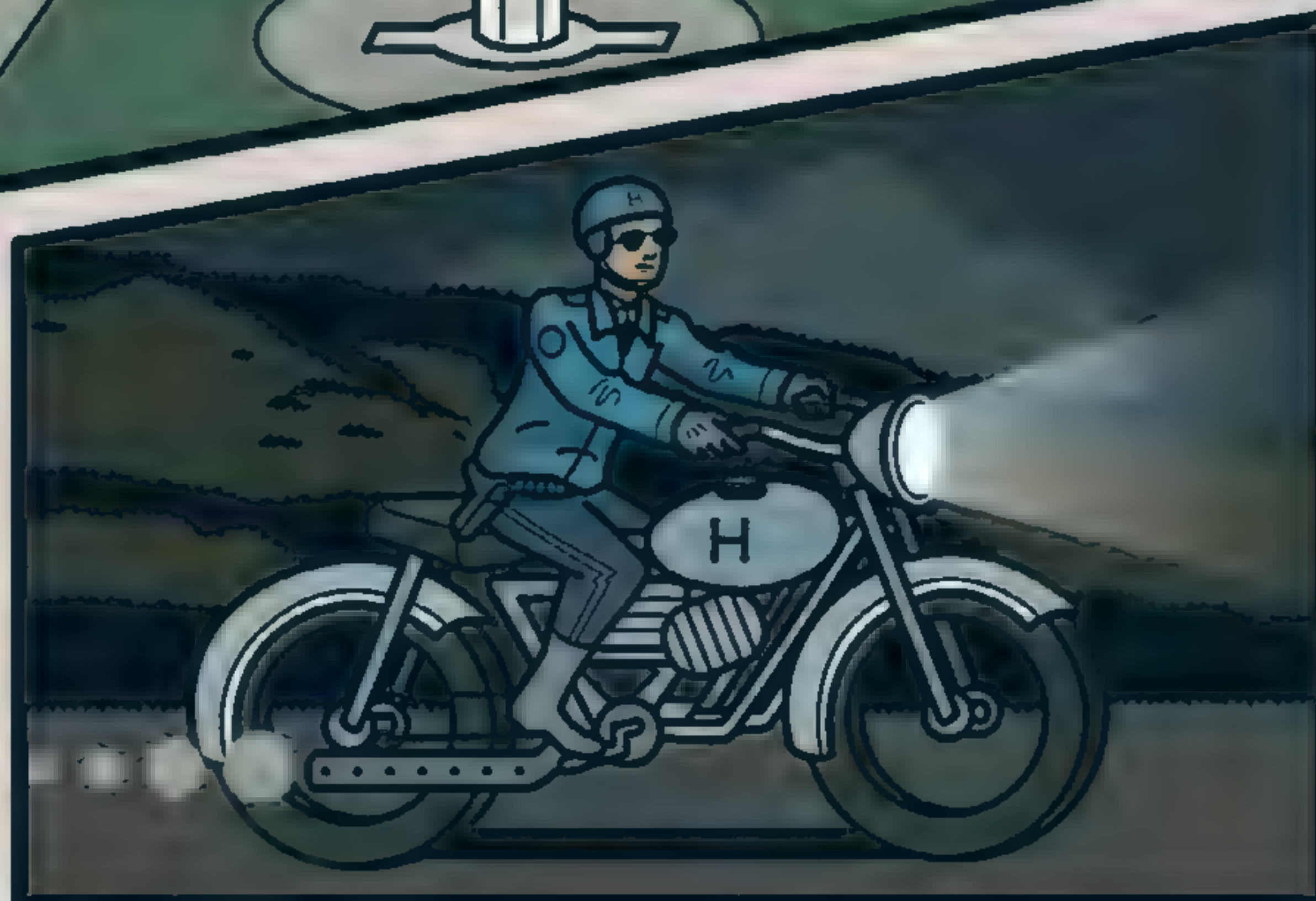
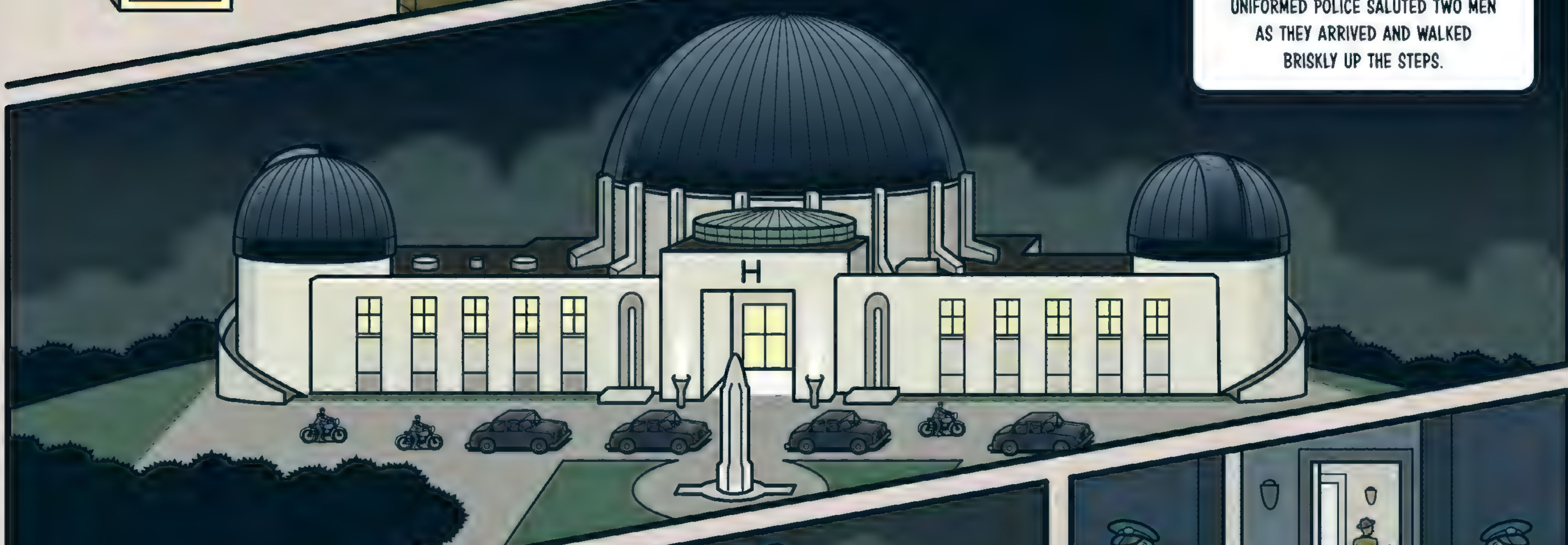


# CHAPTER

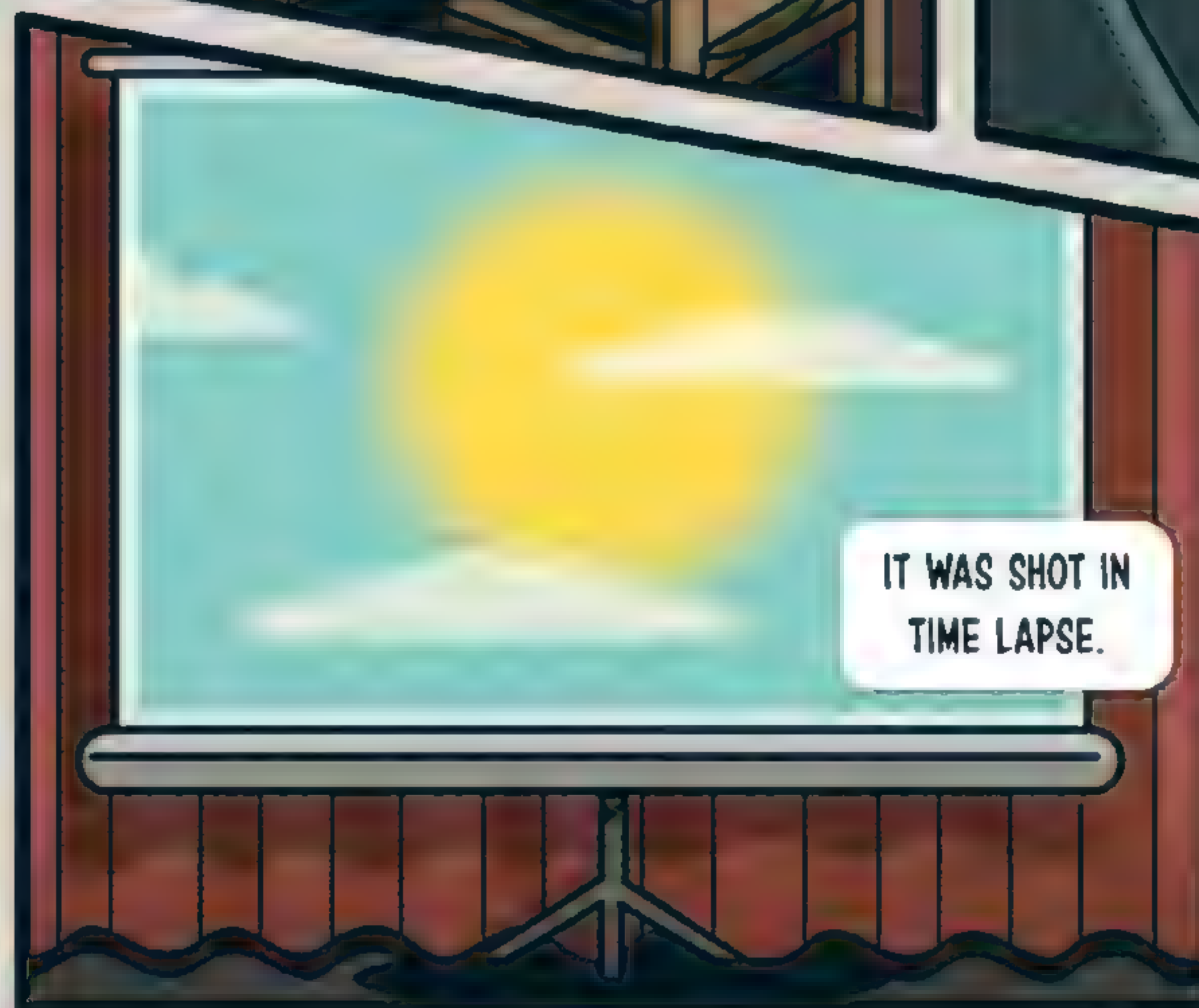
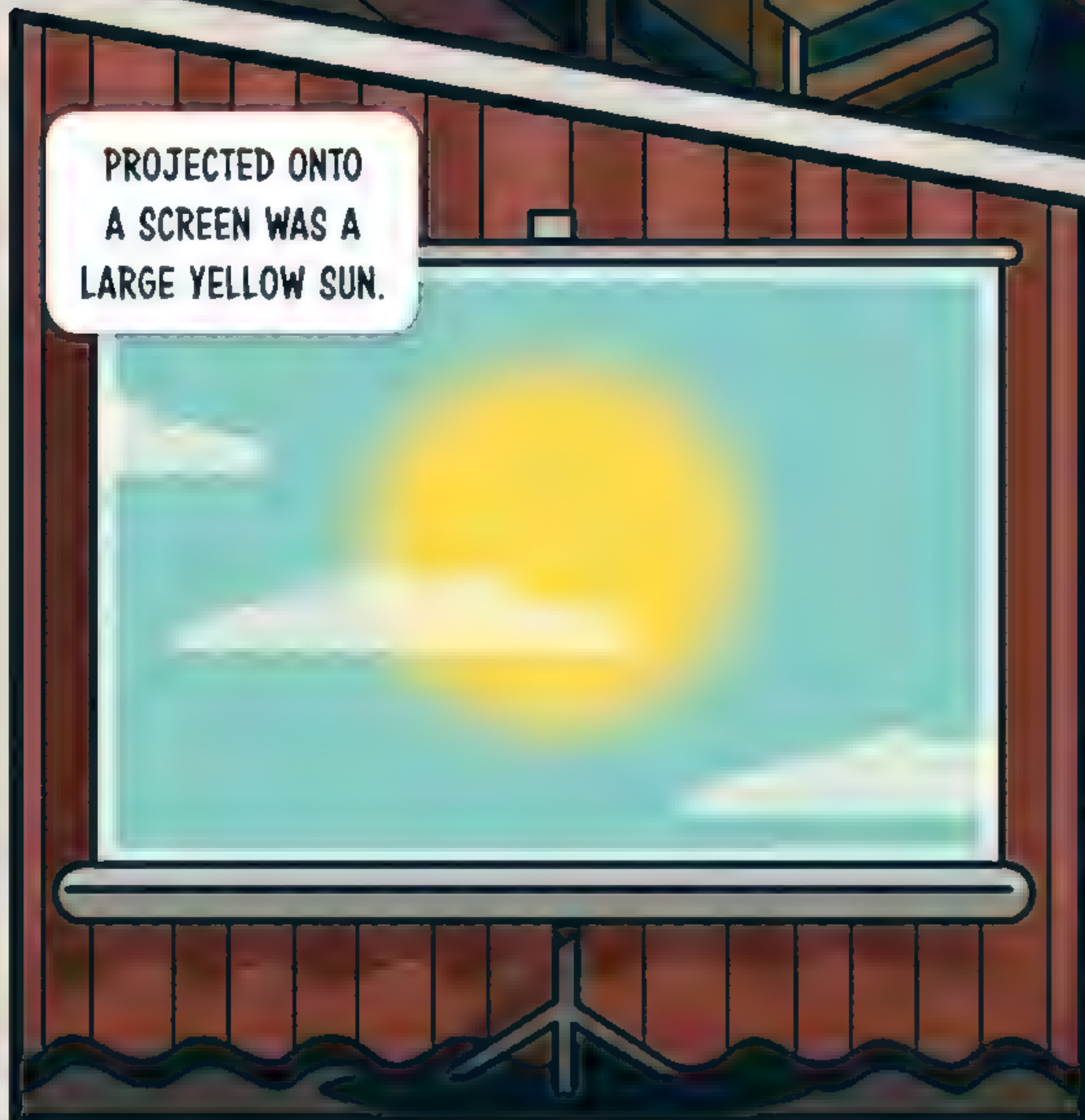
# 22

DARK CLOUDS  
ROLLED ACROSS  
THE A.L.'S NIGHT SKY.

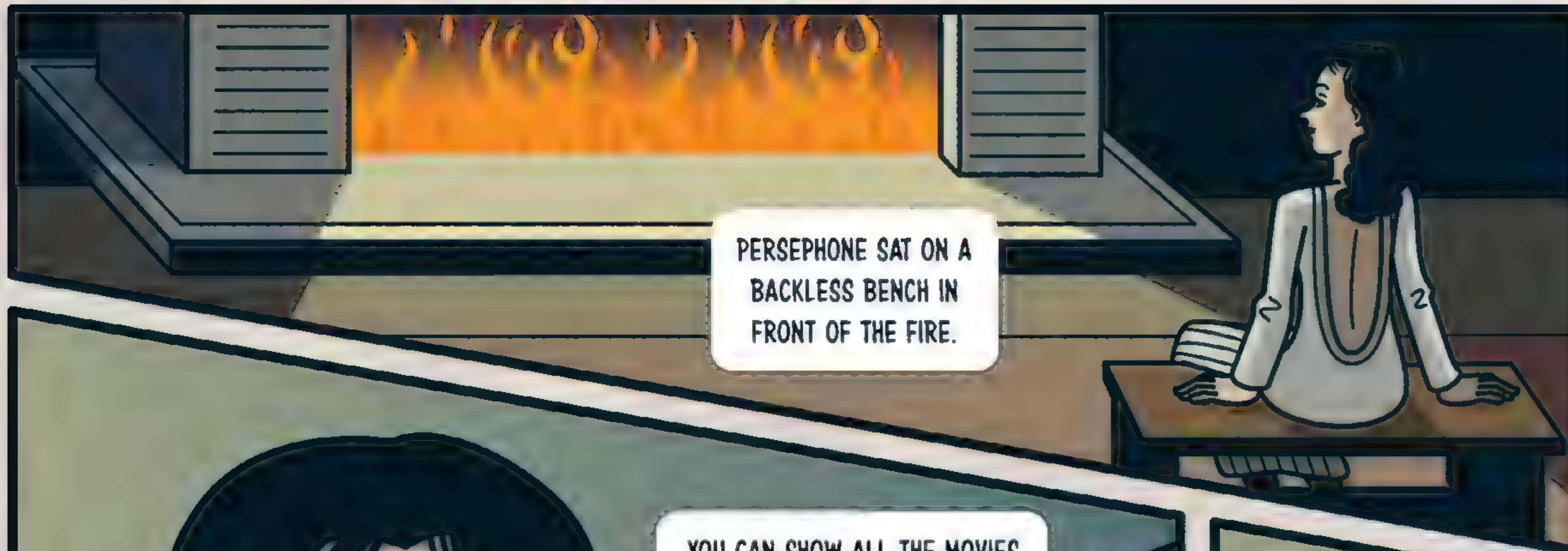
THERE WERE HALF A DOZEN BLACK SEDANS  
PARKED ON THE GRAVEL DRIVEWAY.  
UNIFORMED POLICE SALUTED TWO MEN  
AS THEY ARRIVED AND WALKED  
BRISKLY UP THE STEPS.











PERSEPHONE SAT ON A BACKLESS BENCH IN FRONT OF THE FIRE.



IT'S NOT THE SAME.



YOU CAN SHOW ALL THE MOVIES YOU WANT, BUT IT'S JUST NOT THE SAME. YOU CAN'T FEEL IT, NO MATTER HOW BIG A FIRE YOU MAKE.



IT'S NOT THE SAME KIND OF WARMTH.

HADES CAST A GLANCE OVER AND SHOOK HIS HEAD.



THE TWO MEN STRODE THROUGH THE DOORWAY. THEY STOPPED IN FRONT OF HADES AND SALUTED HIM. THE TALLER MAN HELD OUT HIS HAND AND PLACED A COIN ON THE TABLE.

OLIVIA HAS CROSSED.



VERY WELL... VERY WELL. GIVE HER BACK HER OLD JOB AND APARTMENT. WE WILL KEEP IT ALL LIKE IT WAS...FOR NOW.





THE BLACK SUN HUNG IN THE SKY.



OLIVIA PULLED PLASTIC BAGS OVER A ROW OF OVERCOATS AND STAPLED A RECEIPT TO THE TOP OF EACH METAL HANGER.



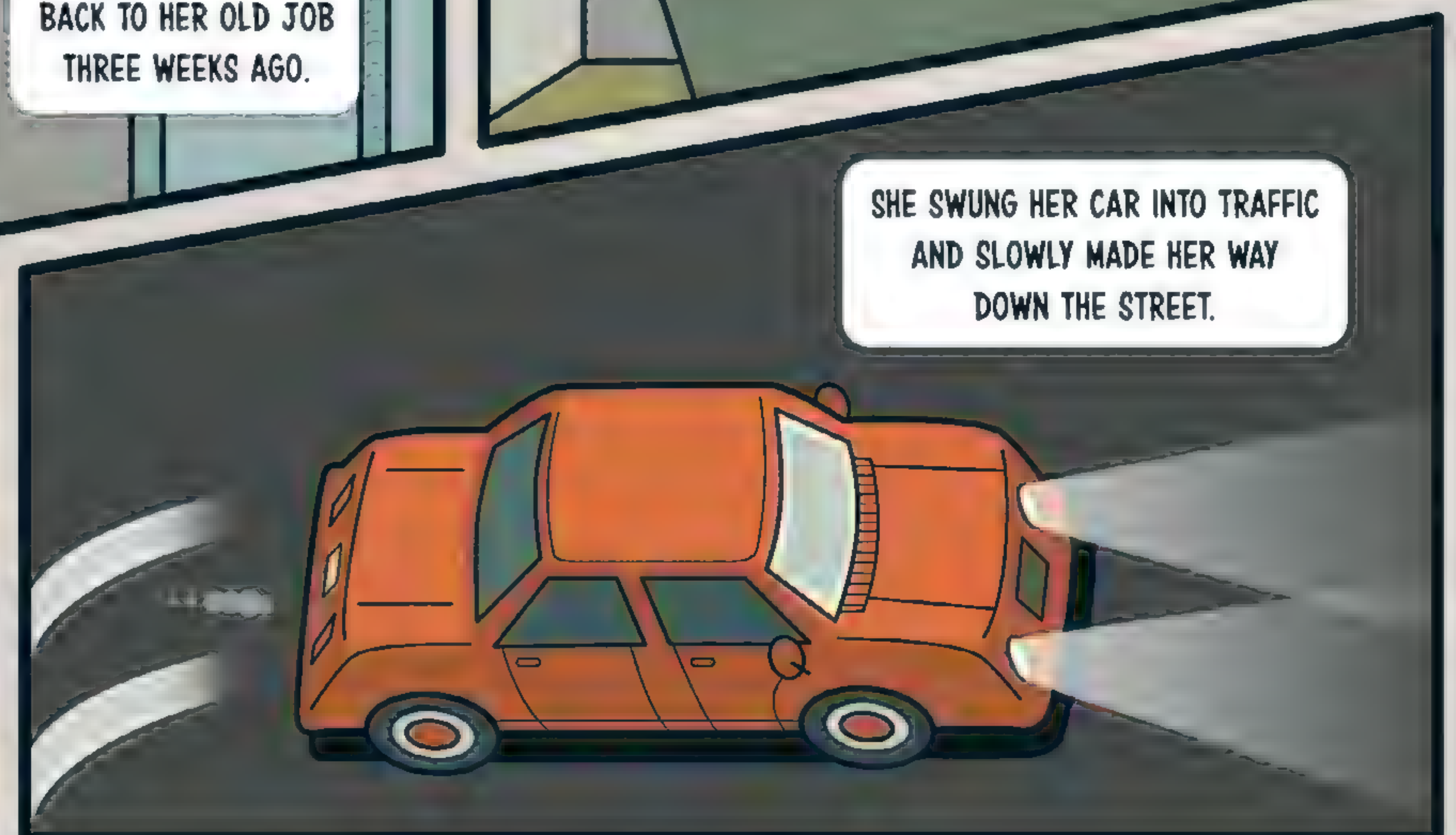
SHE HAD REPORTED BACK TO HER OLD JOB THREE WEEKS AGO.



NO ONE ASKED WHERE SHE'D BEEN OR HOW LONG SHE'D BEEN BACK. THEY KNEW BETTER THAN TO PRY INTO ANOTHER SHADE'S BUSINESS.



AT THE END OF THE DAY, SHE LEFT OUT THE SIDE DOOR.

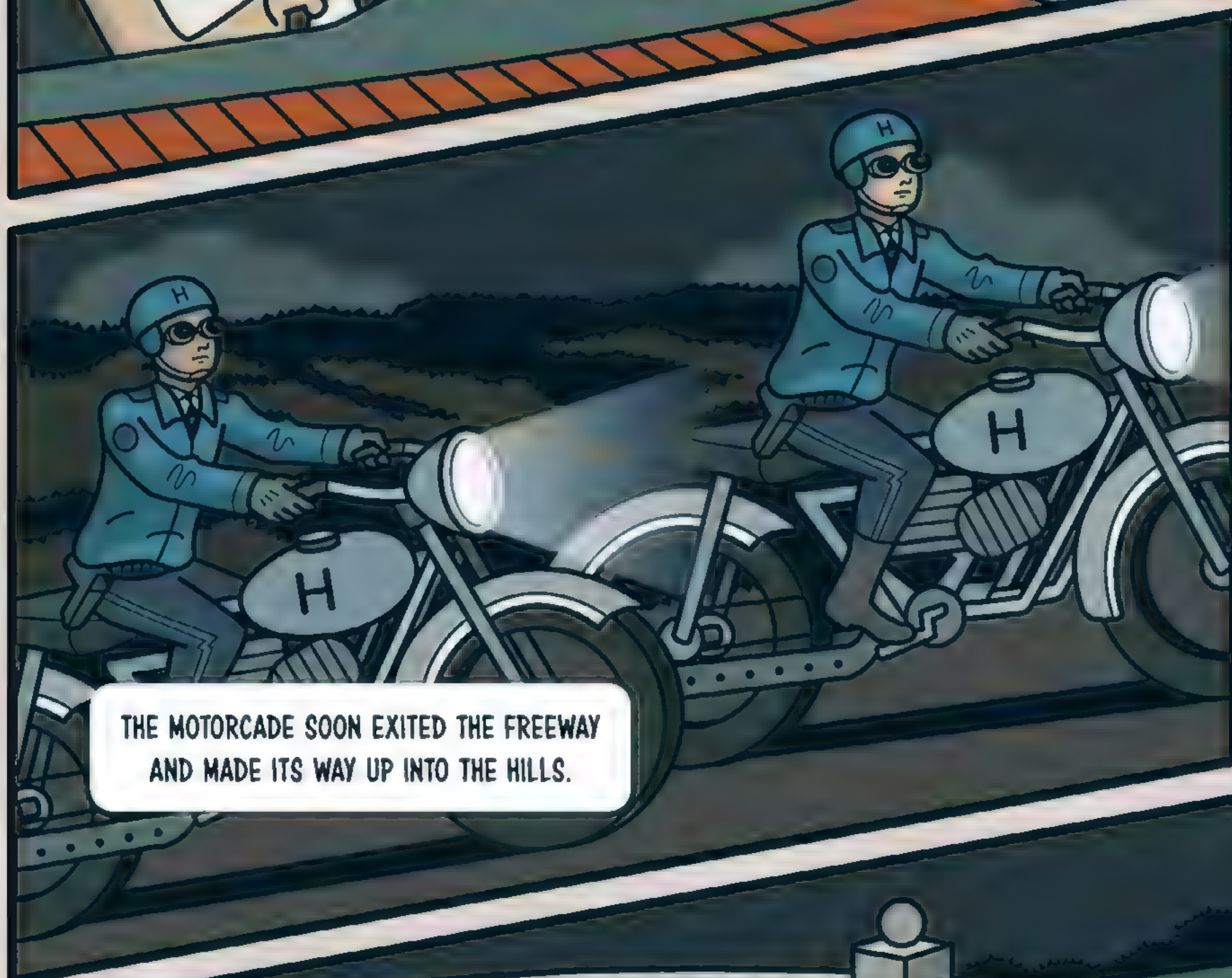


SHE SWUNG HER CAR INTO TRAFFIC AND SLOWLY MADE HER WAY DOWN THE STREET.

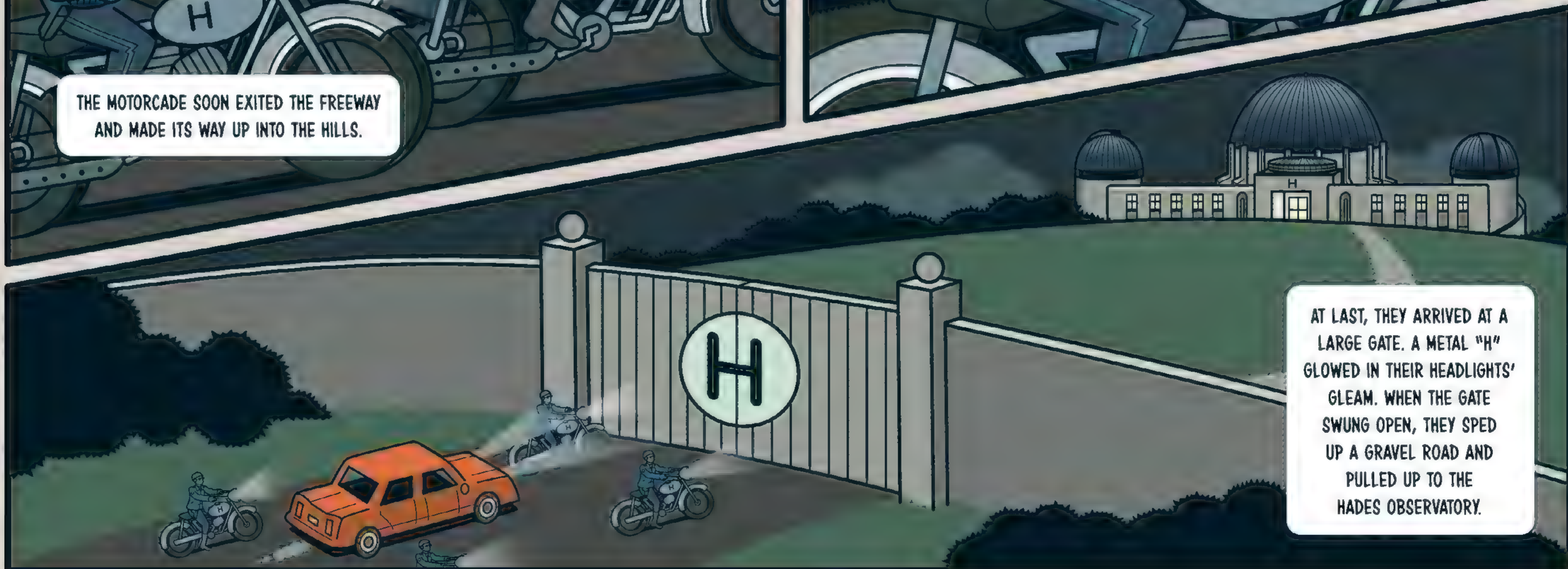
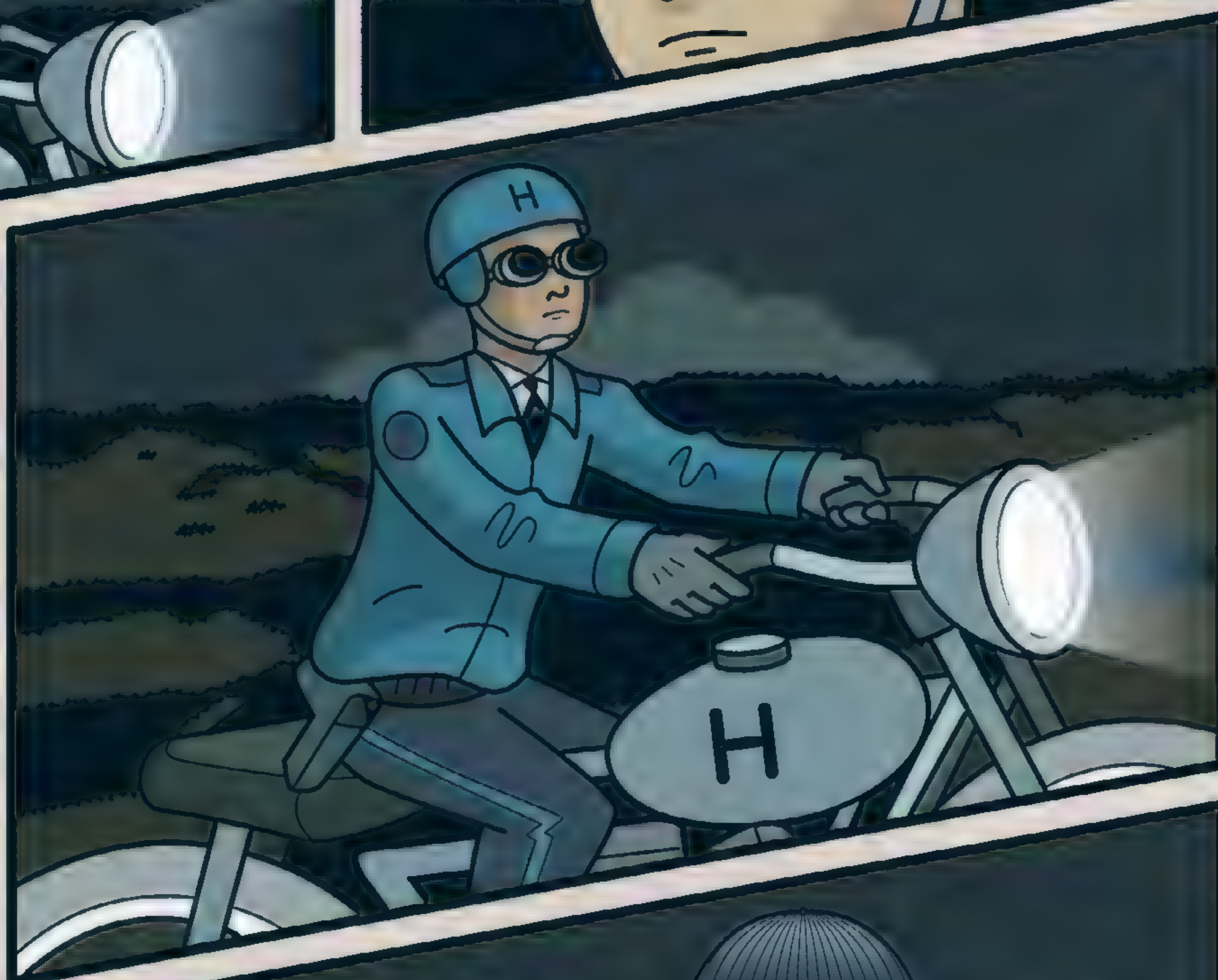




MOTORCYCLE COPS PULLED UP ON EITHER SIDE OF HER CAR AND MOTIONED FOR HER TO FOLLOW THEM.



THE MOTORCADE SOON EXITED THE FREEWAY AND MADE ITS WAY UP INTO THE HILLS.



AT LAST, THEY ARRIVED AT A LARGE GATE. A METAL "H" GLOWED IN THEIR HEADLIGHTS' GLEAM. WHEN THE GATE SWUNG OPEN, THEY SPED UP A GRAVEL ROAD AND PULLED UP TO THE HADES OBSERVATORY.





AS OLIVIA ENTERED THE LONG HALL SHE HEARD HADES VOICE. HE WAS QUESTIONING JIM ABOUT THE C.H.A.R.O.N. GROUP. WAS JIM MORE INVOLVED THAN HE'D LET ON? ...AND WAS OLIVIA TOO?

I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH RUNNING C.H.A.R.O.N. I WAS FORCED INTO IT BY CORRUPT COPS IN THE A.I. AND THE LIVING WORLD.



WHEN OLIVIA WALKED INTO THE ROOM, THEY BOTH TURNED TO LOOK AT HER.



JIM TURNED BACK AGAIN TO HADES.



AT THE VERY LEAST, YOU SHOULD LET OLIVIA GO BACK. HER INVOLVEMENT IN THIS WAS AN ACCIDENT, AND SOMETHING FOR WHICH I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY.



IF THERE'S ANYONE WHO IS INNOCENT, IT'S HER.





TELL ME, JIM, DON'T YOU KNOW WHY YOU HAVE THIS CONNECTOR ABILITY? HAVE YOU NOT GUESSED WHO YOUR REAL FATHER IS?

HE IS A MINOR DEITY...CAERUS. THE GOD OF LUCK AND FAVORABLE OUTCOMES. YOU WERE THE RESULT OF A BRIEF DALLIANCE WITH A MORTAL WOMAN...BETWEEN POKER HANDS, NO DOUBT. YOUR MOTHER GAVE YOU UP TO AN ORPHANAGE. YOUR ADOPTIVE PARENTS NEVER KNEW YOUR BACKGROUND.

WHERE IS MY FATHER NOW?

IN LAS VEGAS...MOST LIKELY. HE'S NOT ABOVE USING HIS DEITY STATUS TO COUNT CARDS. YOU CAN LOOK HIM UP IF YOU LIKE, BUT I DOUBT YOU'LL LIKE WHAT YOU FIND... LOW-CLASS MOUNT OLYMPUS IS CAERUS.

SO, JIM IS A DEMIGOD. SINCE UP TO THIS POINT HIS TRUE PATERNITY HAS BEEN A MYSTERY TO HIM, YOU CAN'T BLAME HIM FOR UNKNOWNLY UPSETTING THE BALANCE.

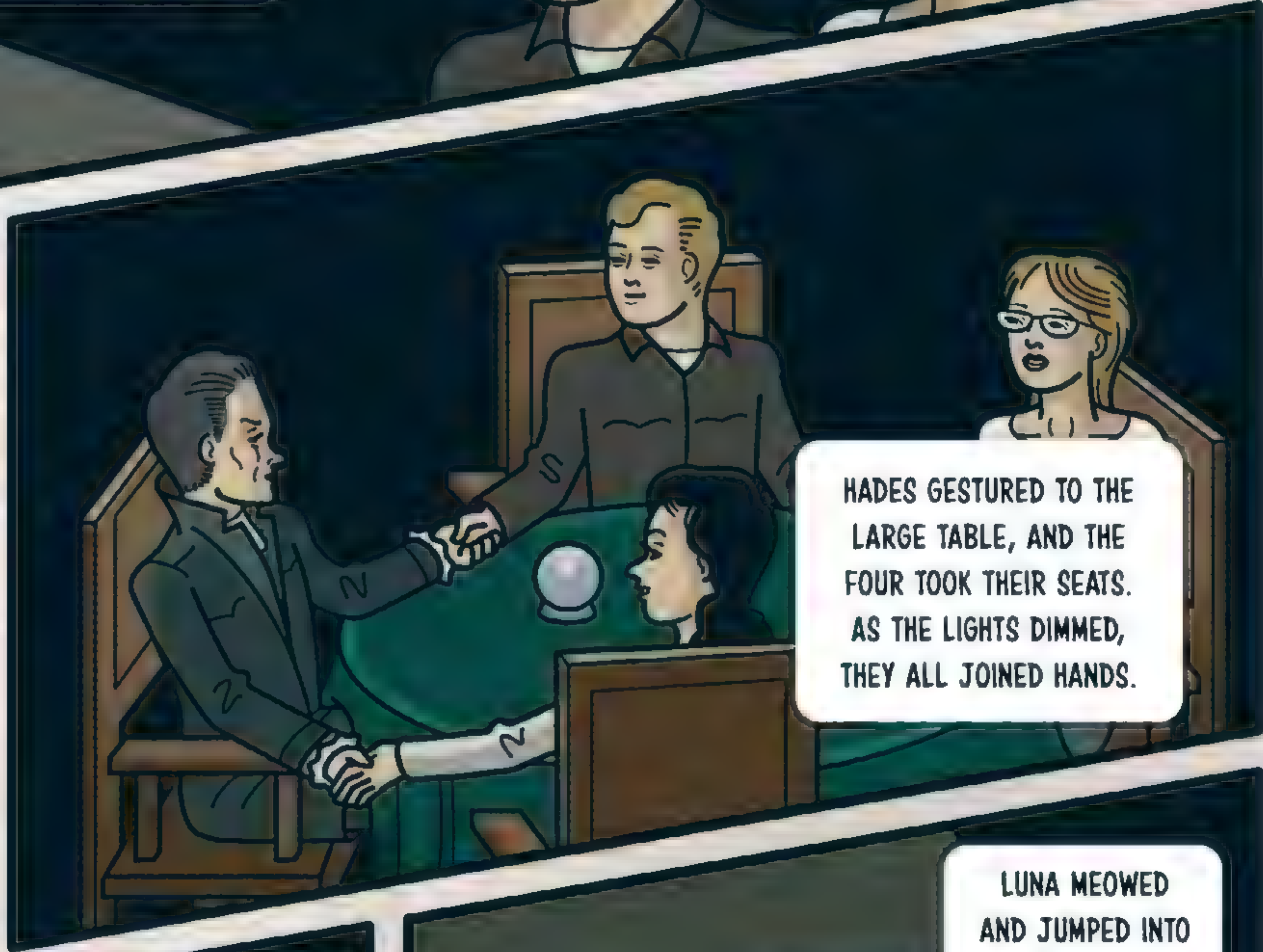




RELUCTANTLY, HADES AGREED WITH HIS WIFE. HOWEVER, HE WOULD ONLY LET THE TWO OF THEM GO IF JIM COMPLETED A TASK FOR HIM...



I WANT YOU TO STEAL A PAINTING FROM THE HOME OF A HOLLYWOOD PRODUCER AND BRING IT TO ME. THEN I'LL GRANT YOU YOUR REQUEST. ...IT'S A MARK ROTHKO. I'VE BEEN WANTING IT FOR YEARS.



HADES GESTURED TO THE LARGE TABLE, AND THE FOUR TOOK THEIR SEATS. AS THE LIGHTS DIMMED, THEY ALL JOINED HANDS.



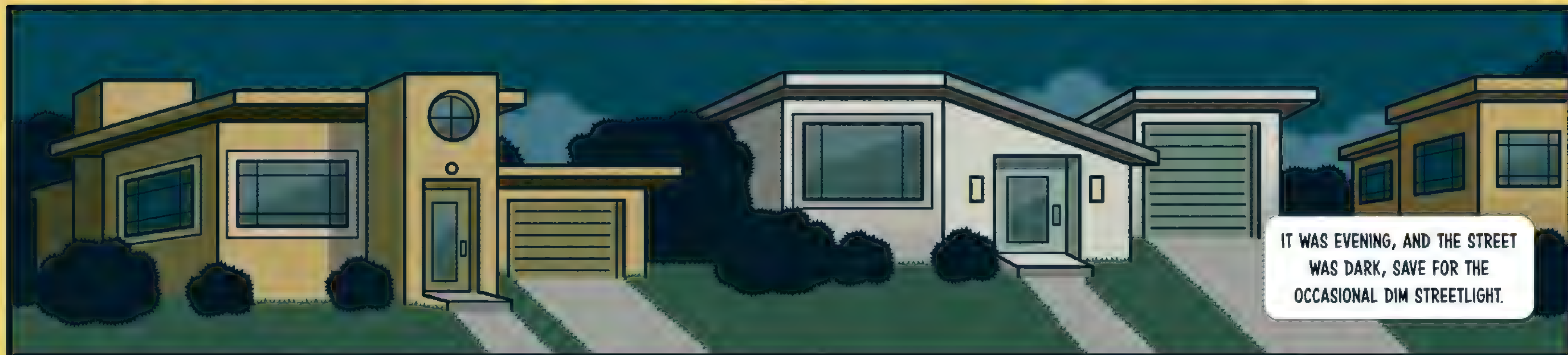
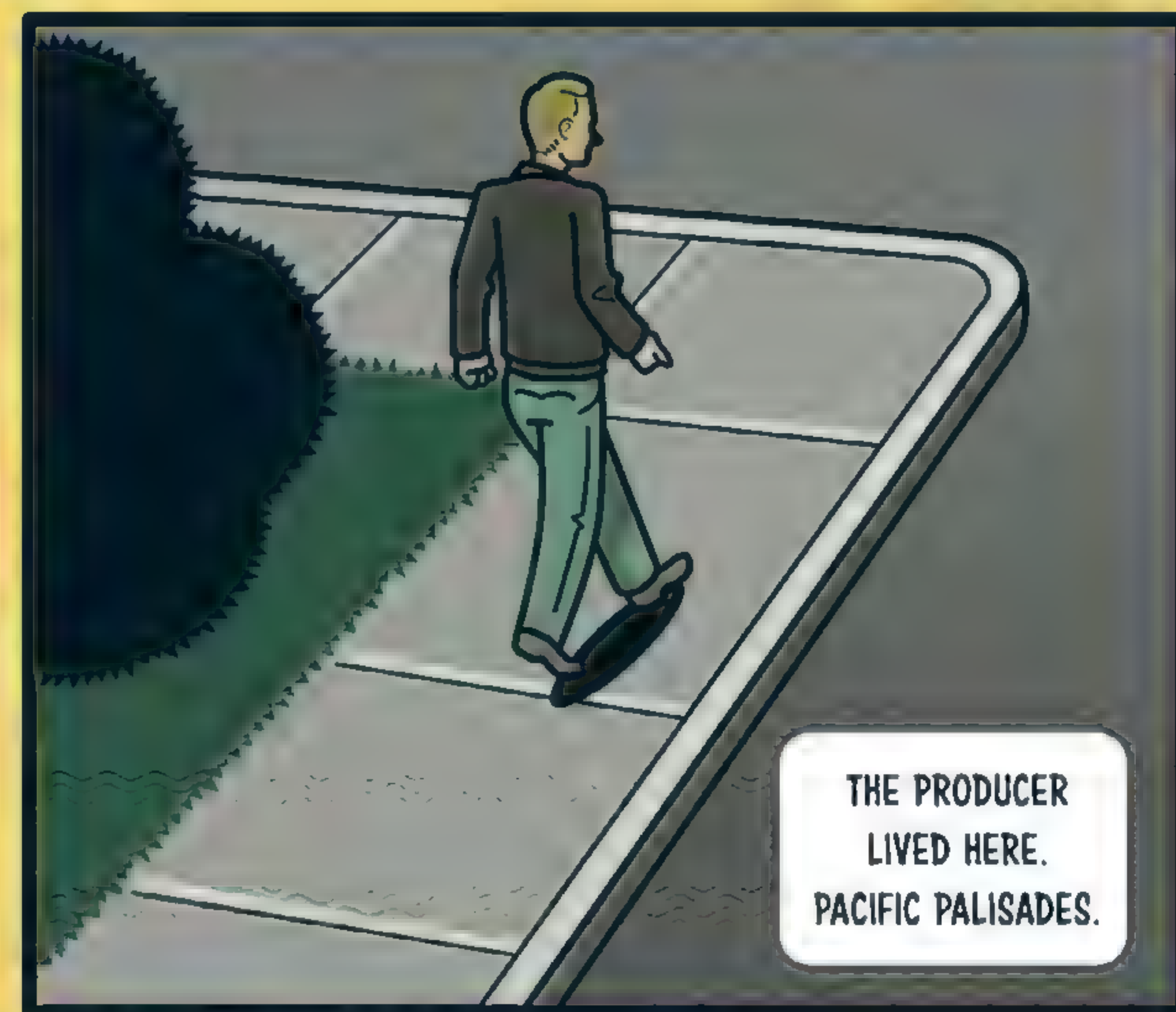
AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, IT WENT DARK AND JIM DISAPPEARED.



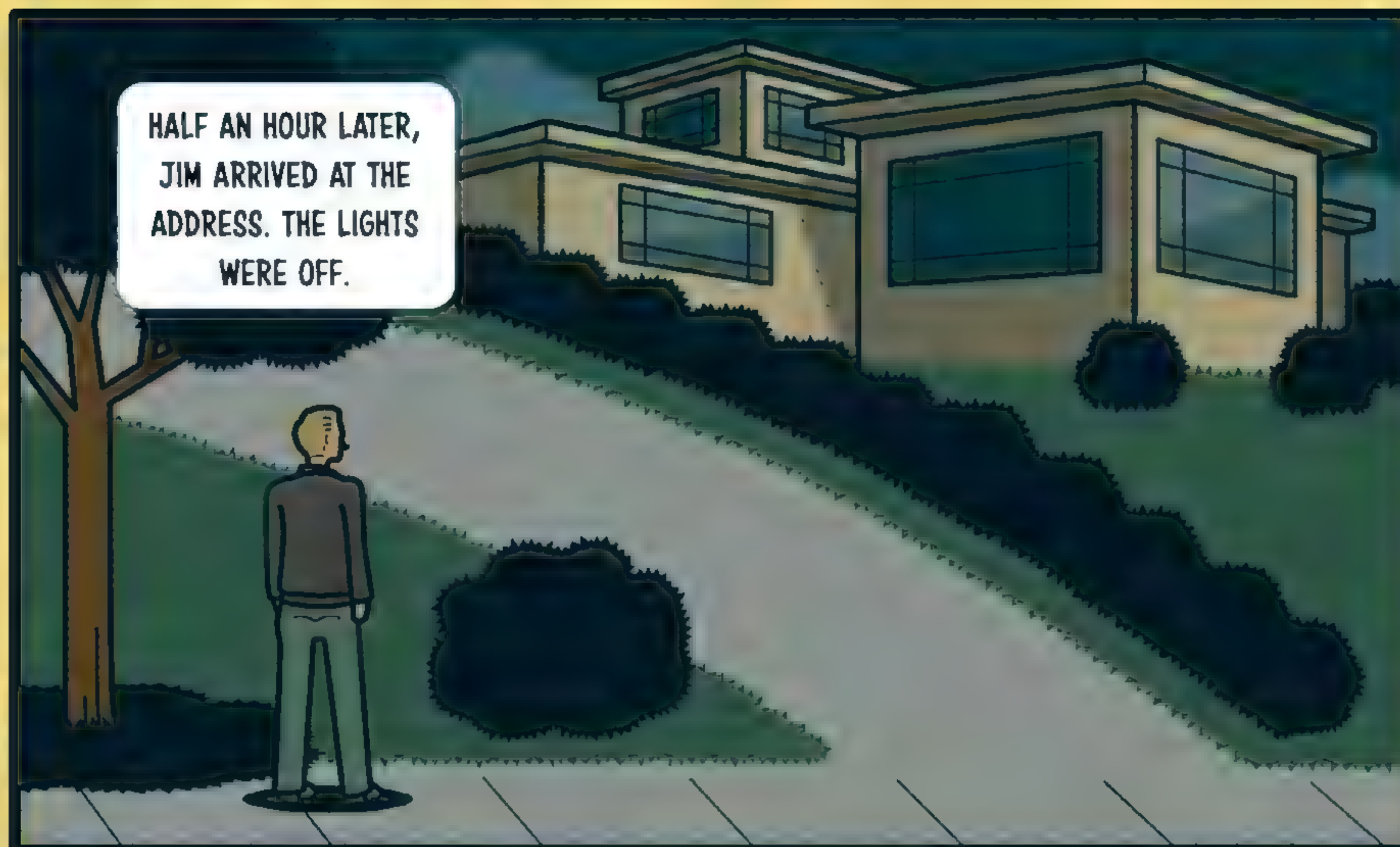
LUNA MEOWED AND JUMPED INTO PERSEPHONE'S LAP.



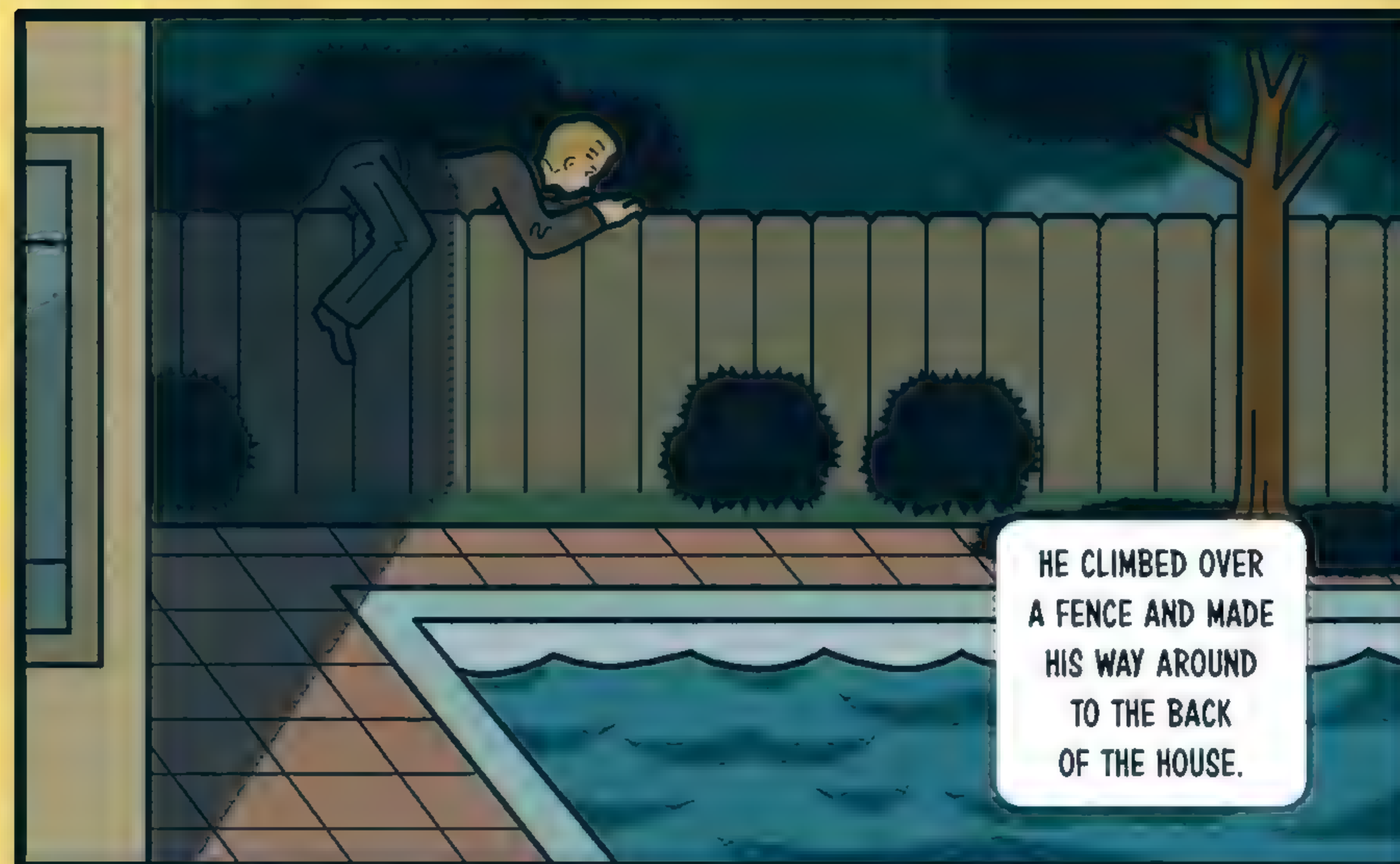
# CHAPTER 23







HALF AN HOUR LATER,  
JIM ARRIVED AT THE  
ADDRESS. THE LIGHTS  
WERE OFF.



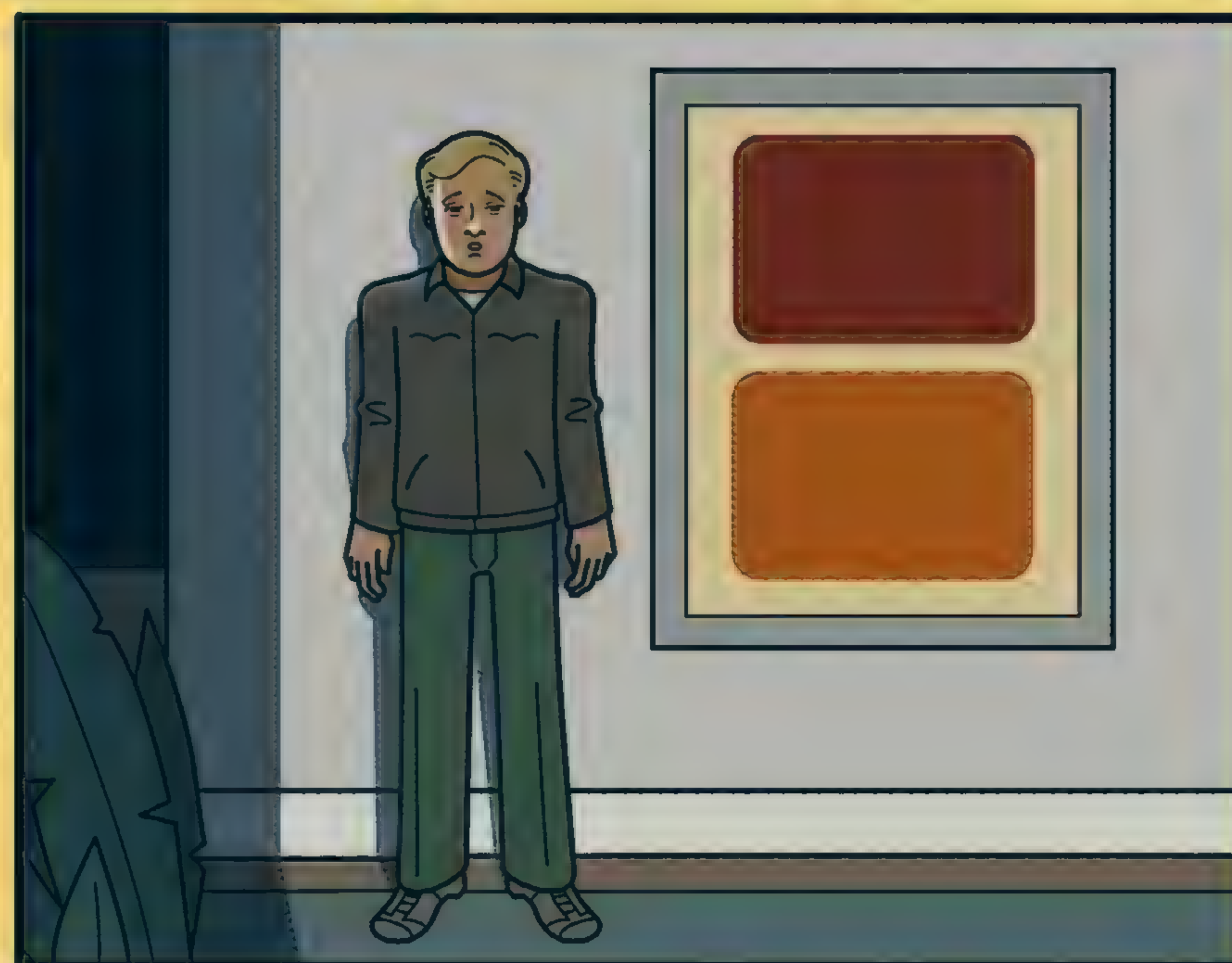
HE CLIMBED OVER  
A FENCE AND MADE  
HIS WAY AROUND  
TO THE BACK  
OF THE HOUSE.



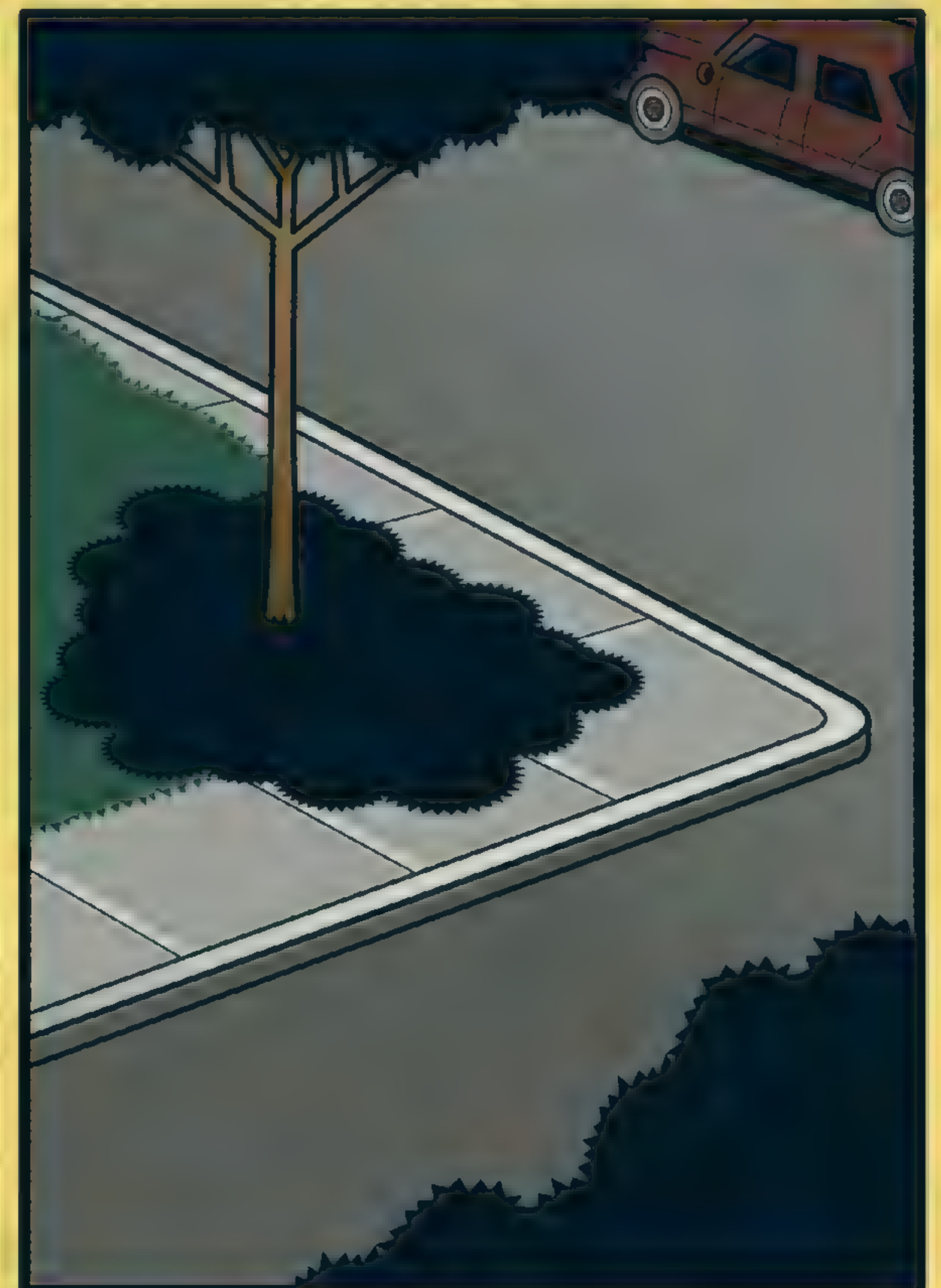
THE SLIDING DOOR  
WAS UNLOCKED. HE  
SLOWLY PULLED IT  
OPEN AND EASED  
INTO THE DARK  
LIVING ROOM.

HANGING ON THE WHITE WALL  
WAS THE ROTHKO, ITS  
DARK RED AND ORANGES  
SEEMED TO GLOW  
IN THE LOW LIGHT.











# CHAPTER

24





HE CALLED JIM OVER TO  
THE WINDOW AND POINTED  
OUT THE SHADES ARRIVING  
FROM ACROSS THE RIVER.  
A LONG LINE OF FIGURES  
WERE SLOWLY MAKING THEIR  
WAY DOWN THE GRAVEL  
DRIVEWAY. ONE OF THEM  
WAS THE HOLLYWOOD  
PRODUCER...



...HE THOUGHT HE HAD  
YEARS YET TO LIVE...  
MORE DEALS, MORE  
PLANS...I WAS NEVER  
REALLY THAT ANGRY  
WITH HIM BECAUSE  
I KNEW HIS TIME  
LEFT IN THE LIVING  
WORLD WAS SHORT.



HADES SHOOK  
HIS HEAD  
AND SMILED.



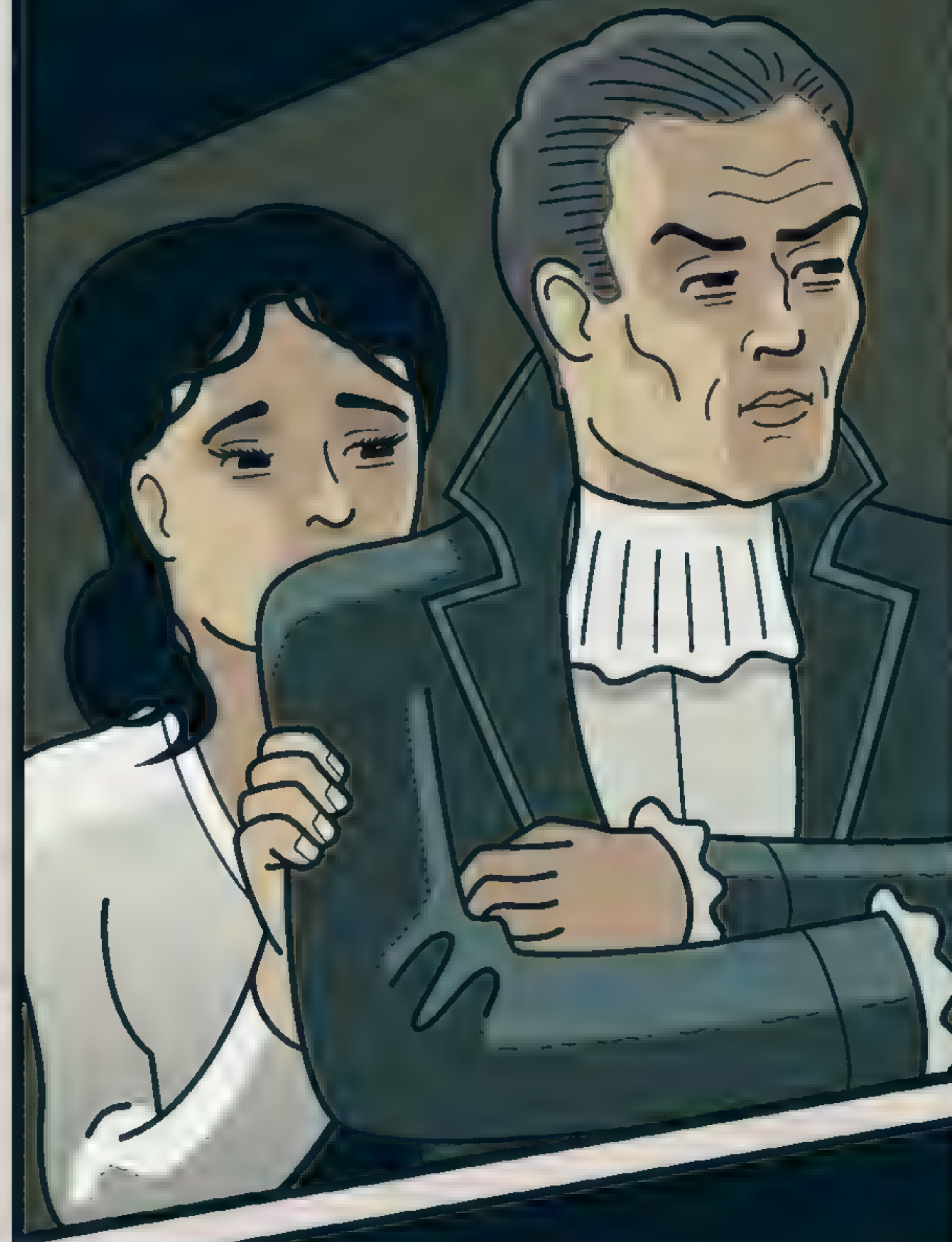
PERSEPHONE  
AND OLIVIA  
WERE PLAYING  
WITH THE CAT.



PERSEPHONE HAD BECOME  
FOND OF OLIVIA AND  
ENJOYED HER COMPANY.



SHE HAD CONVINCED HADES  
THAT JIM AND OLIVIA  
DESERVED A CHANCE...



...TO ENJOY THE  
LIVING WORLD  
ONCE MORE.



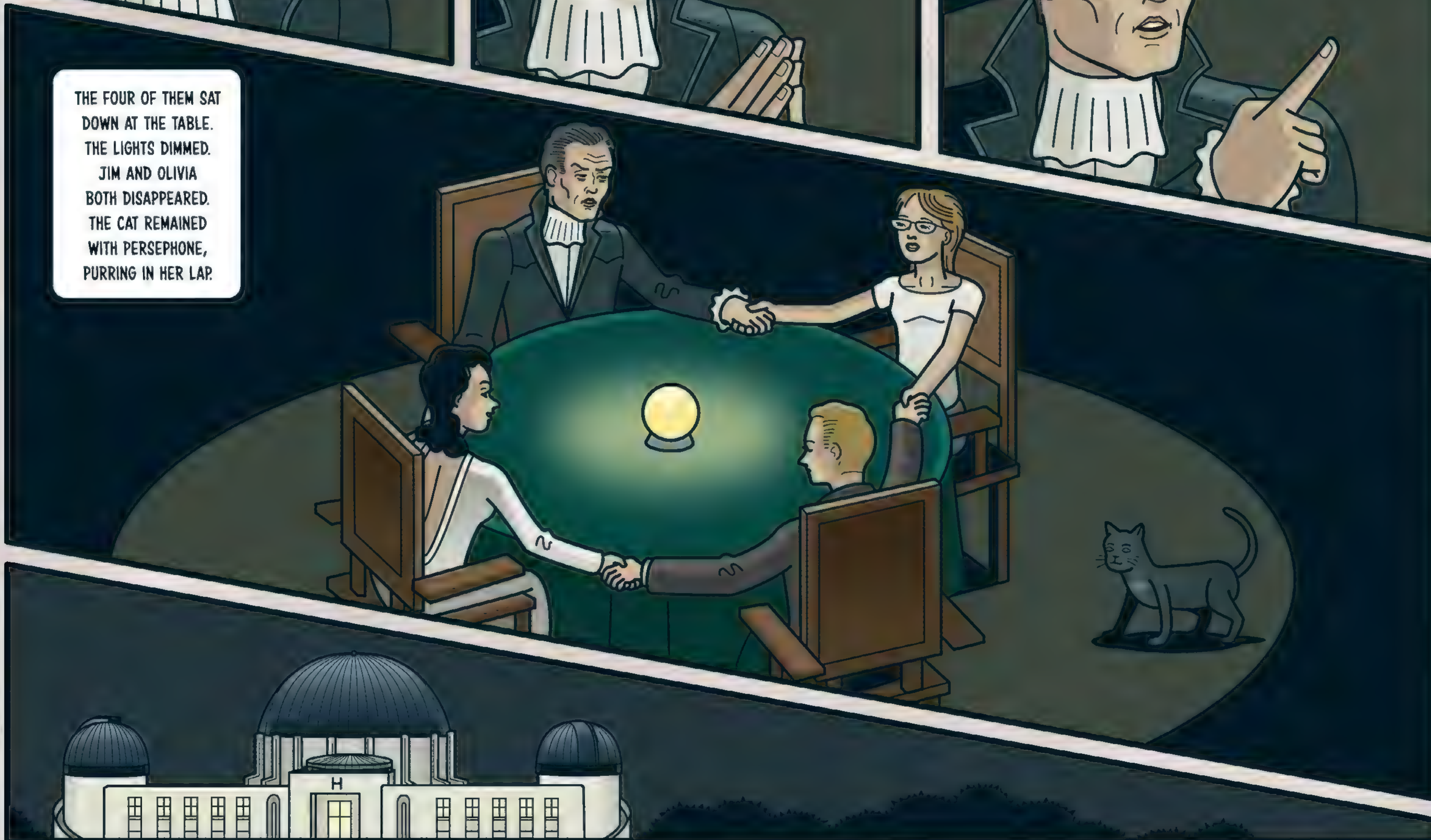
LIKE I NEVER  
GET TO DO.



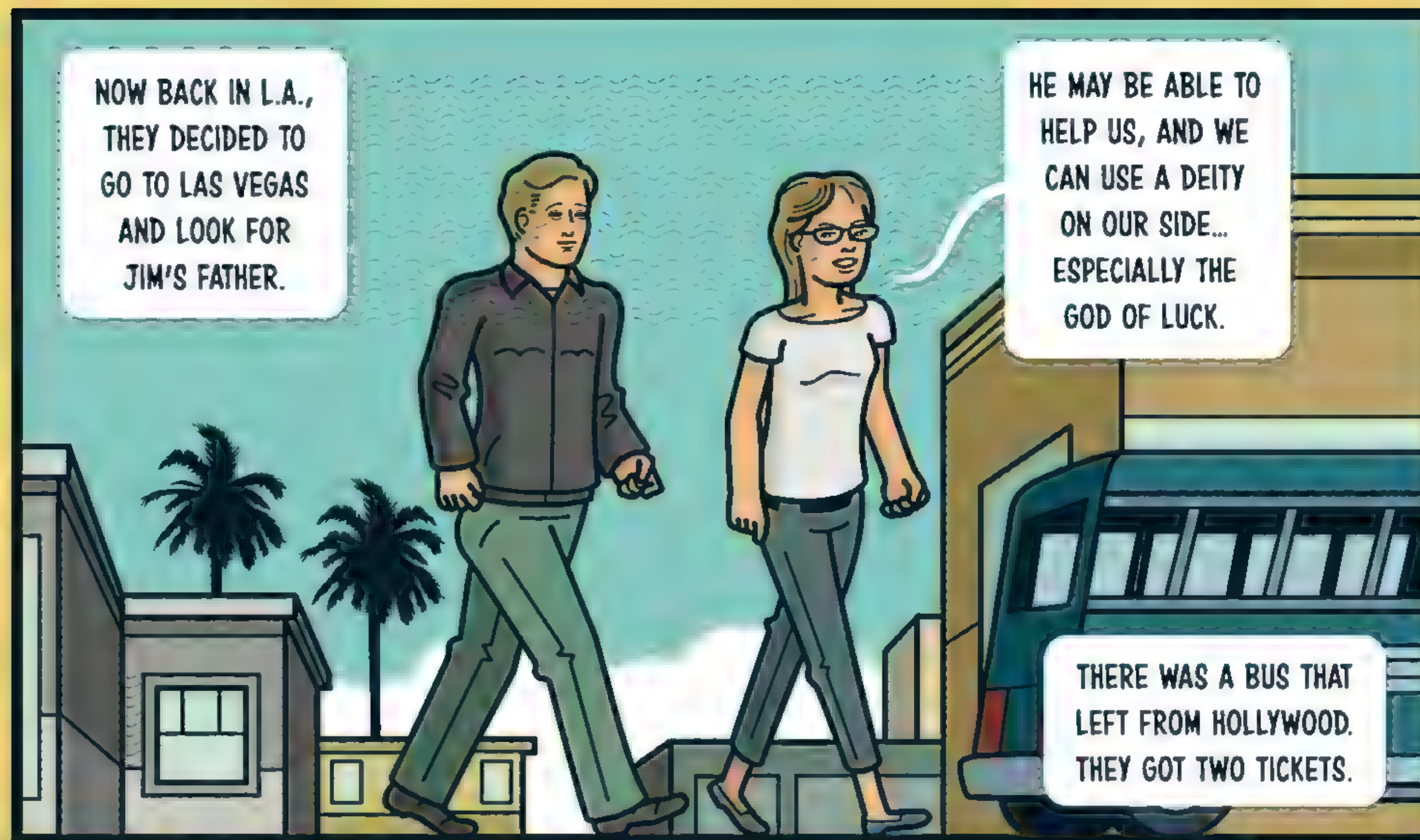




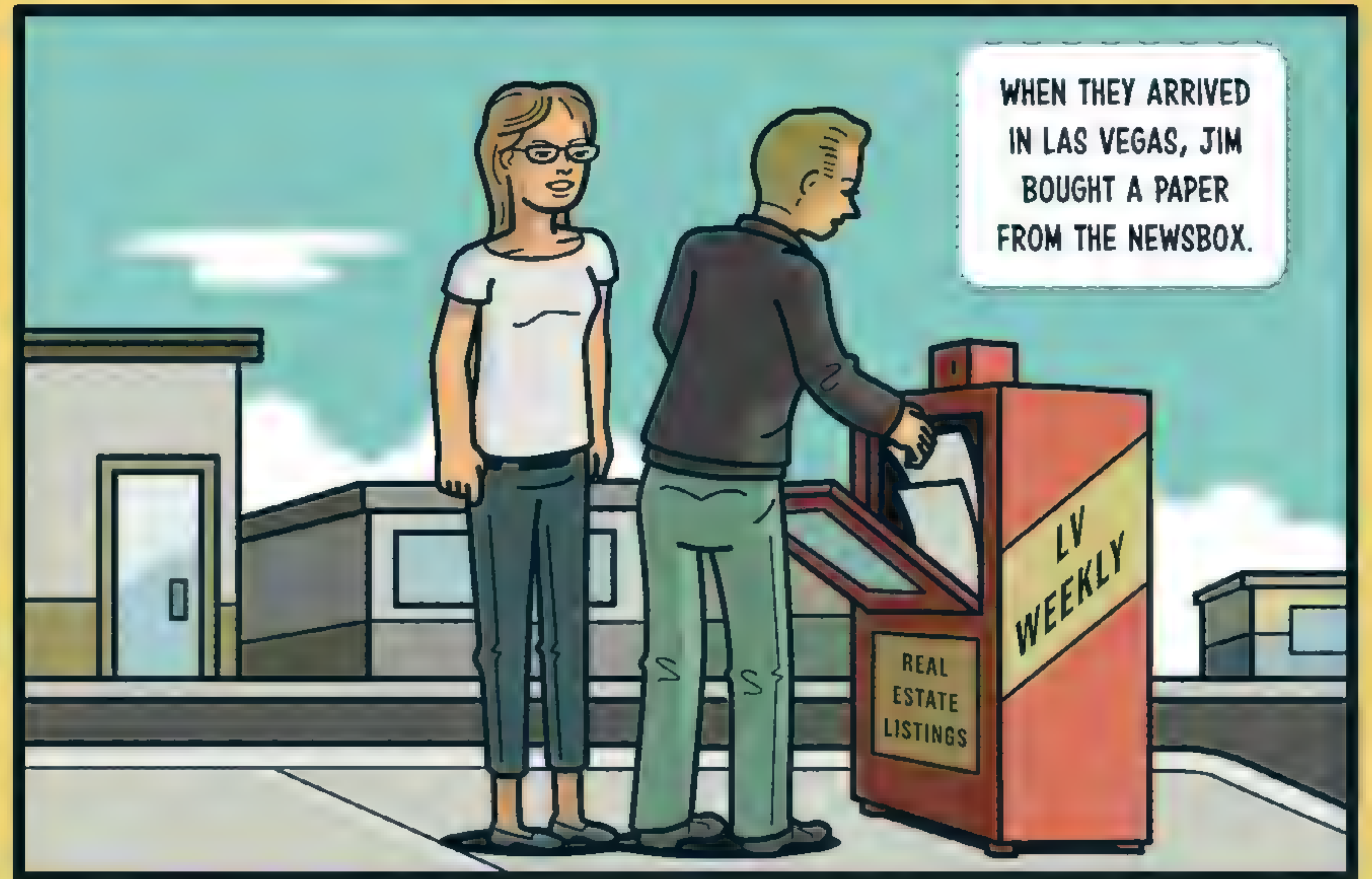
THE FOUR OF THEM SAT DOWN AT THE TABLE. THE LIGHTS DIMMED. JIM AND OLIVIA BOTH DISAPPEARED. THE CAT REMAINED WITH PERSEPHONE, PURRING IN HER LAP.











# MOTHER WHO LOST BOTH CHILDREN TAKES OWN LIFE

SHE WAS PAGING THROUGH THE PAPER WHEN SHE SAW A STORY ABOUT A SUICIDE.

A LARGE PHOTO ACCOMPANIED THE STORY. IT WAS HER MOM...

MOTHER OF TWO



OLIVIA HAD SEEN HER MOTHER, JUST AS HADES  
HAD WARNED. SHE IMMEDIATELY REALIZED HER MISTAKE...



JIM LOOKED OVER AND  
SAW THAT SHE WAS GONE.



THE PAPER WAS LEFT FLAPPING ON THE BENCH.  
JIM LOOKED DOWN, SAW THE PHOTO OF  
OLIVIA'S MOTHER, AND INSTANTLY KNEW...



JIM HAD TO FIND HIS FATHER.  
MAYBE HE COULD HELP GET OLIVIA BACK  
INTO THE LIVING WORLD ONCE MORE...







JIM BEGAN SEARCHING FOR HIS FATHER. HE COMBED THROUGH THE CASINOS, LOOKING FOR A MAN ON A WINNING STREAK.



THREE HOURS LATER HE FOUND HIM, HUNCHED OVER A CRAPS TABLE, IN A LOW-END CASINO OFF THE STRIP.

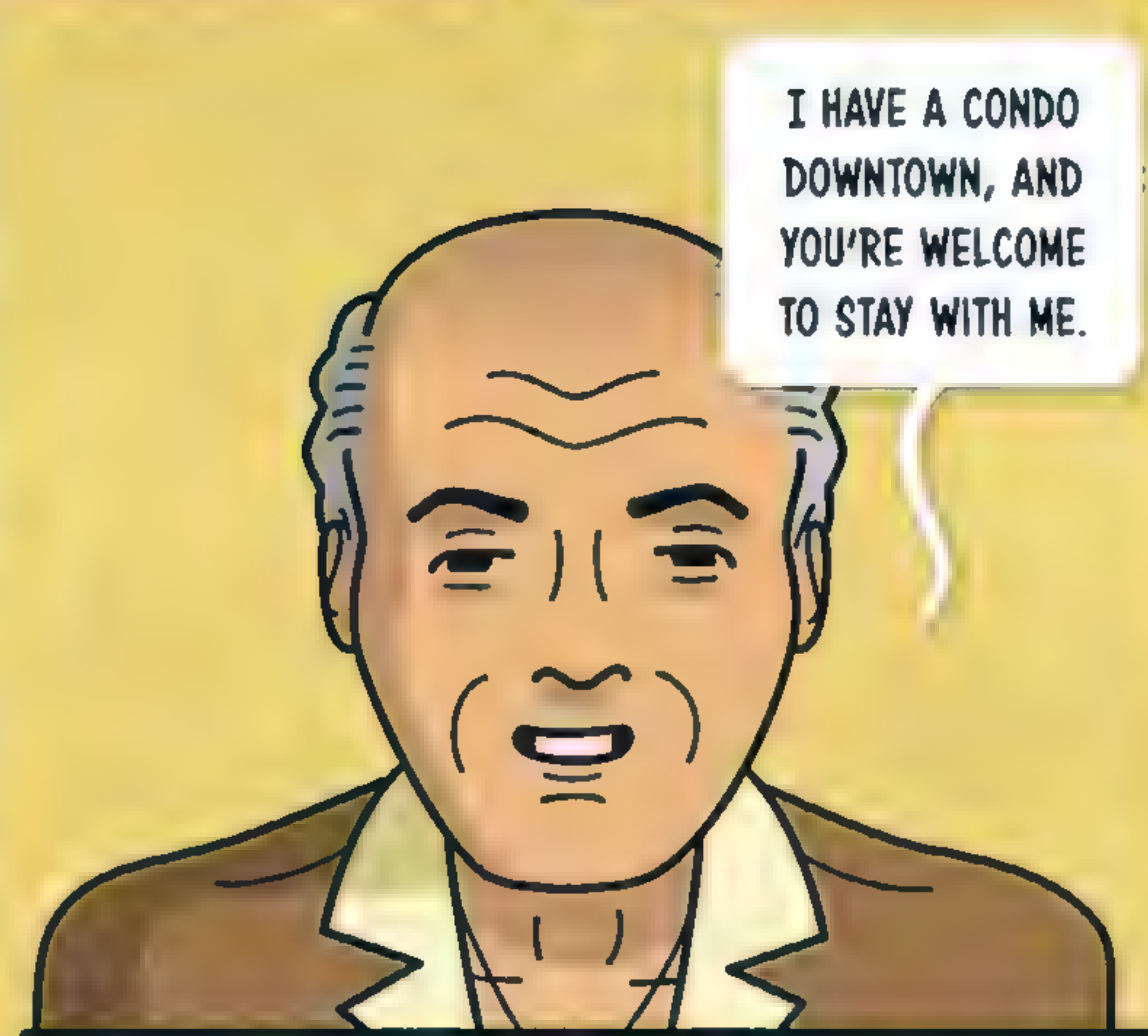
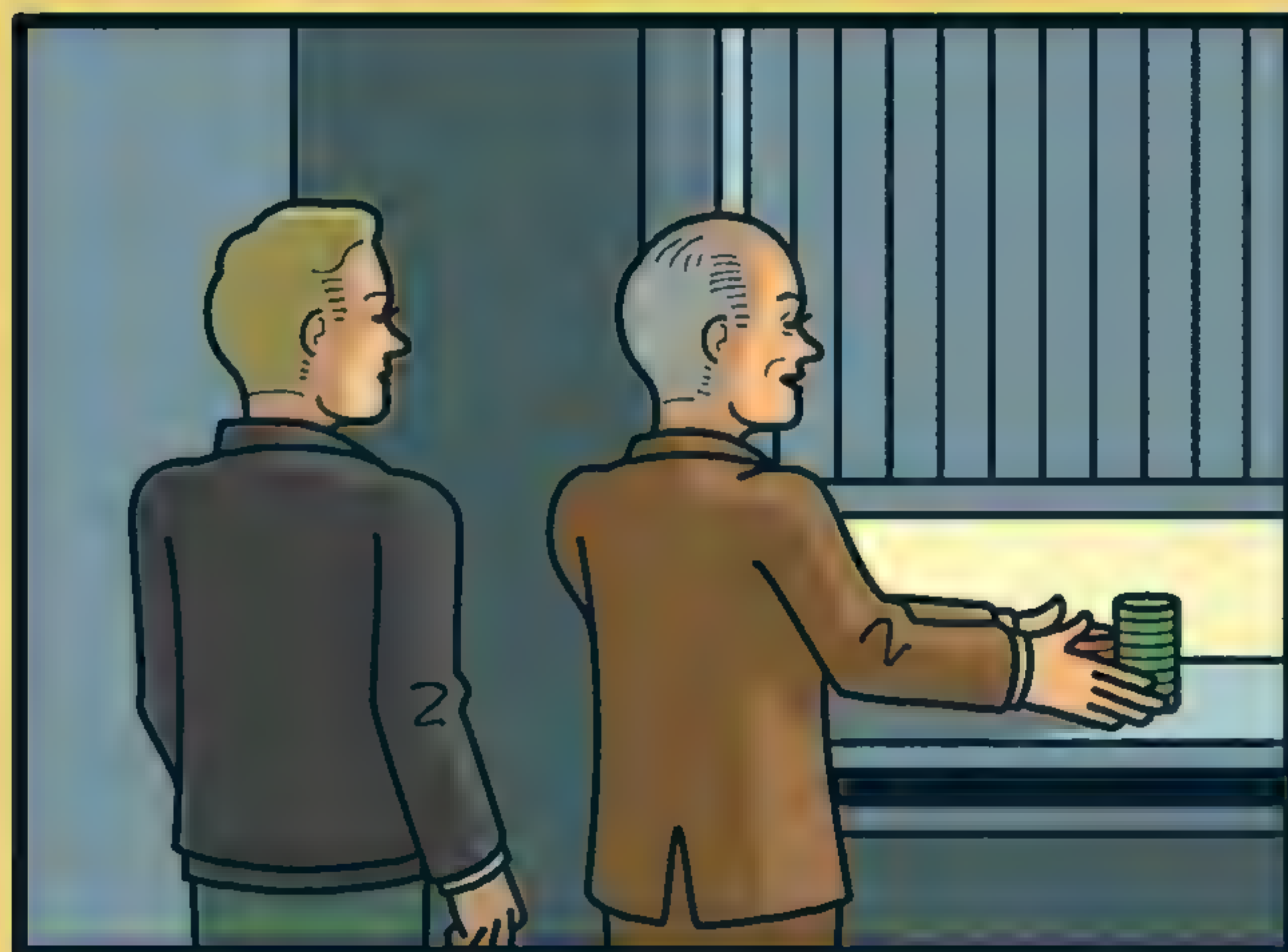
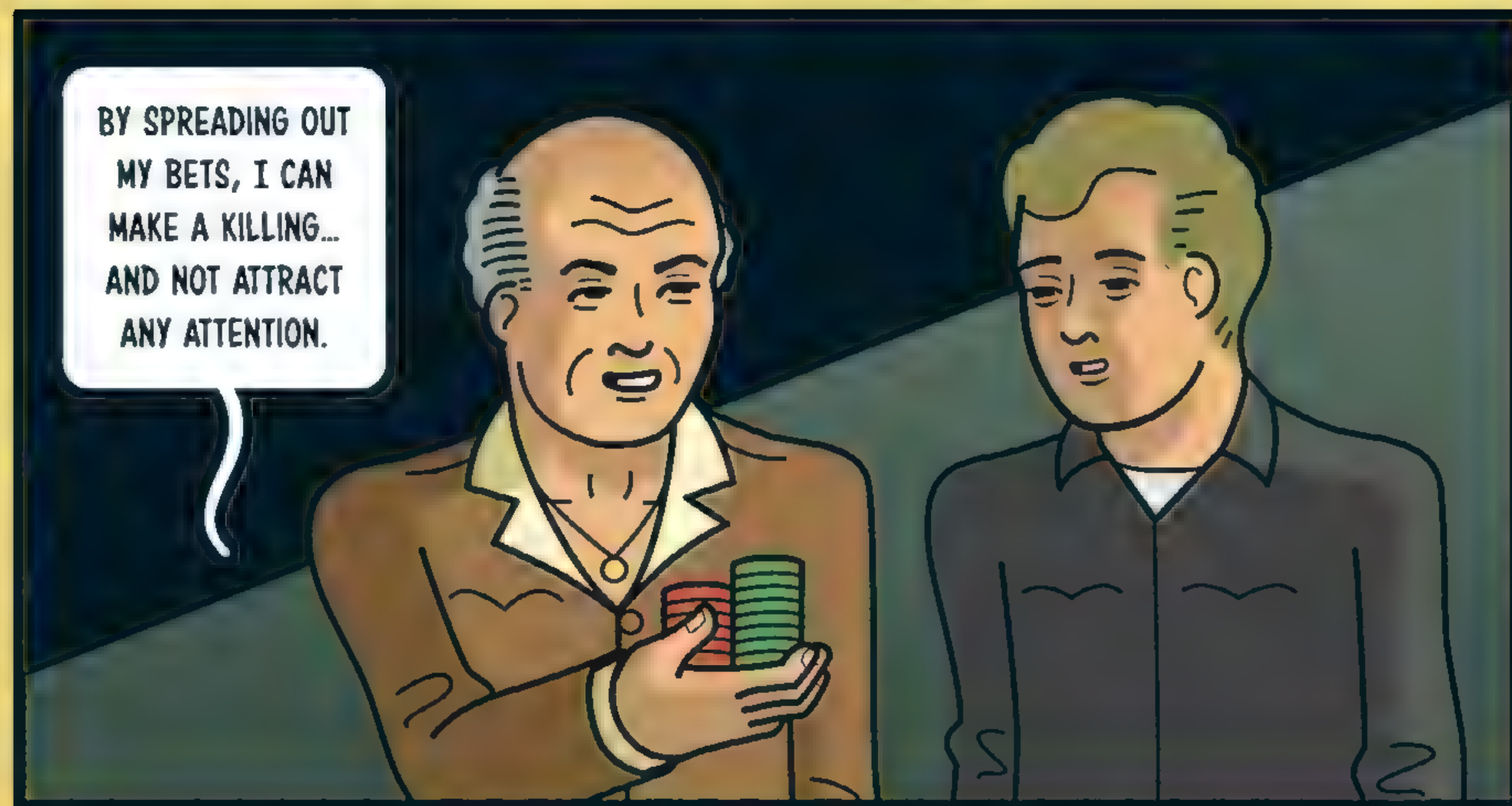


HIS FATHER WAS STICKING TO SMALL WAGERS ON THE \$5 TABLE. JIM WATCHED HIM FOR A WHILE BEFORE HE APPROACHED HIM.



CAERUS WAS STARTLED BUT NOT UNHAPPY TO SEE HIS SON.



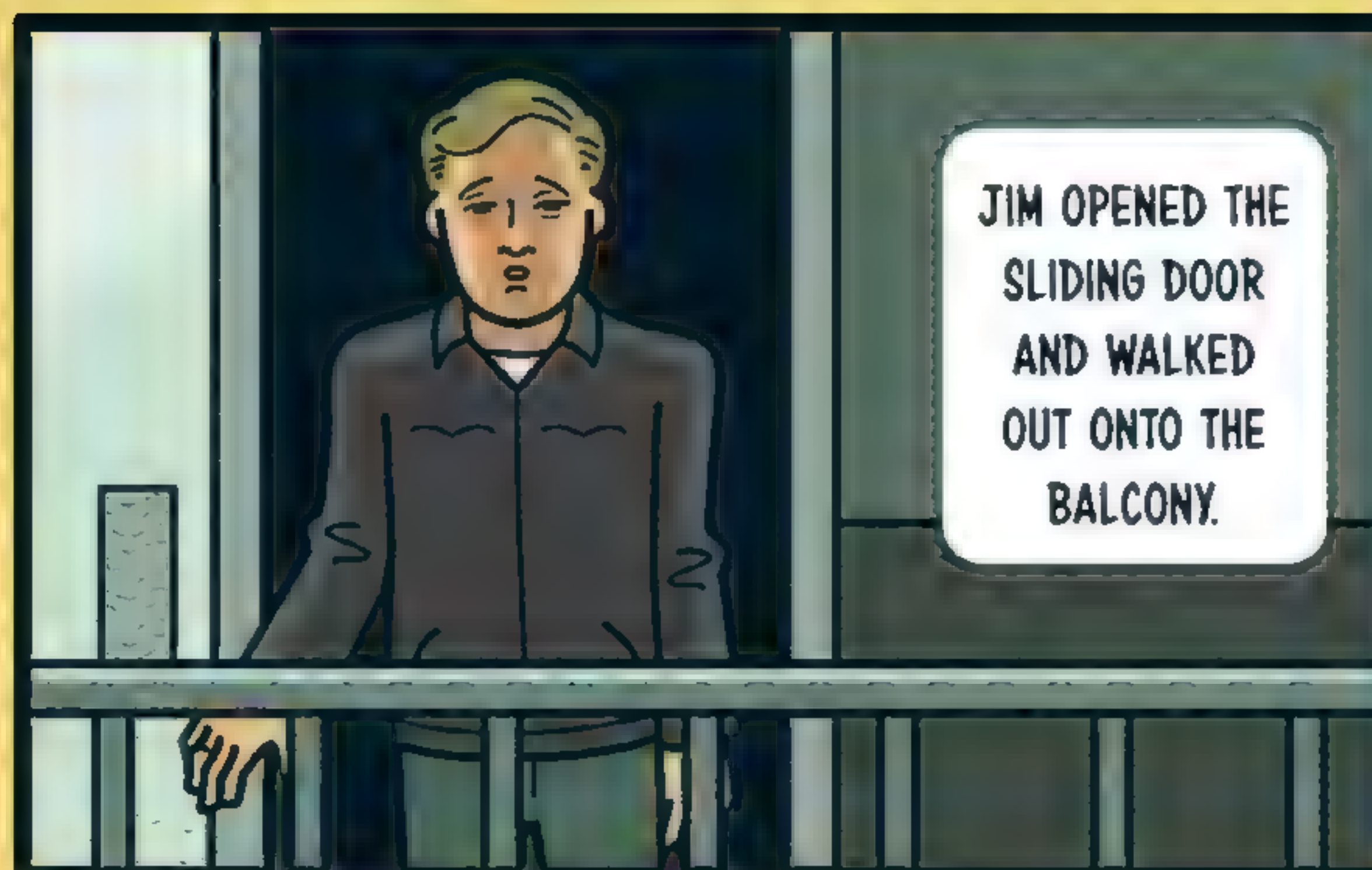




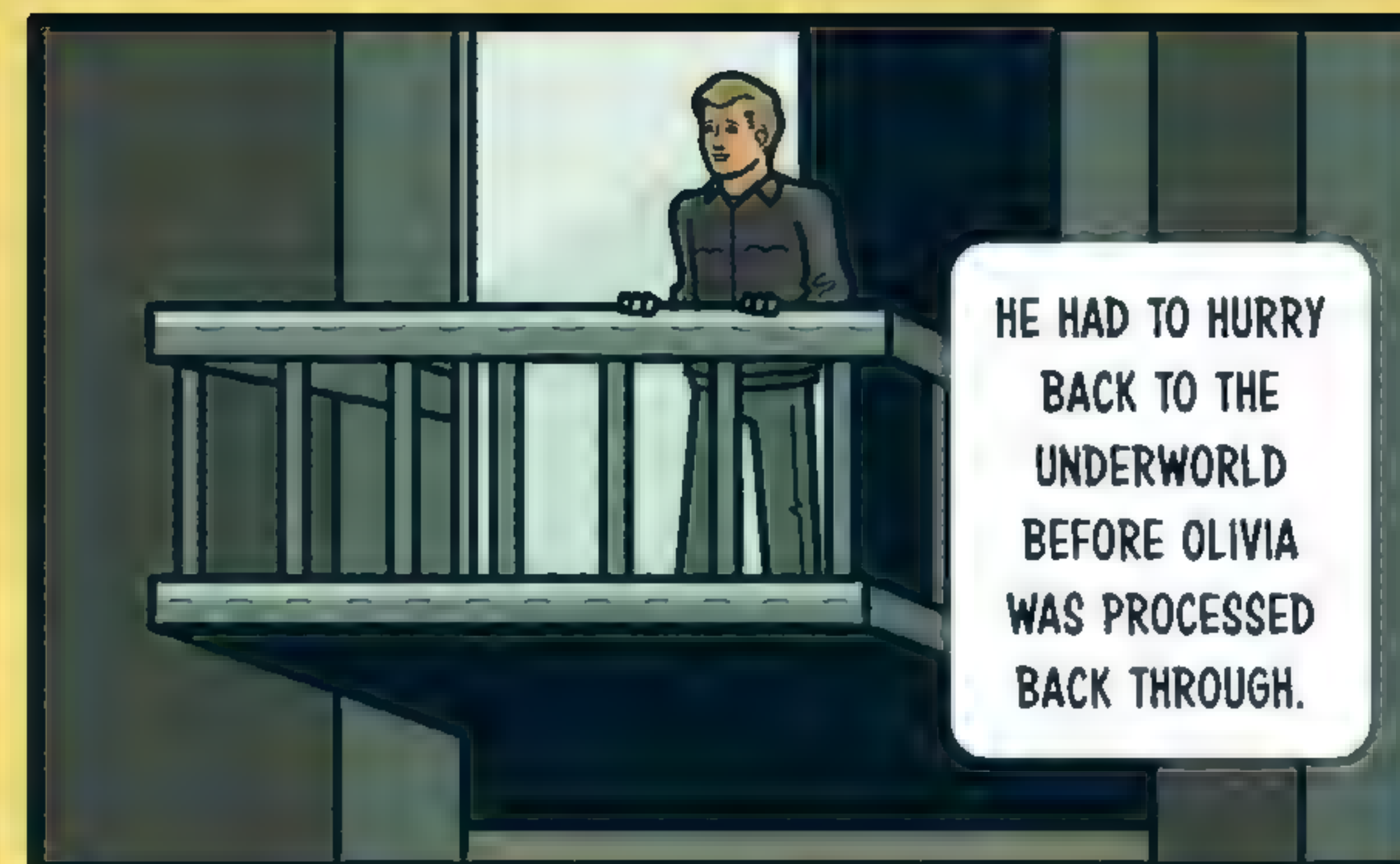


CAERUS  
GAVE HIM  
A RING.

TRY WEARING THIS WHEN  
YOU GO BACK. IT WILL  
BRING YOU LUCK... IF YOU  
CAN GET HADES TO MAKE  
A WAGER, YOU'LL WIN.



JIM OPENED THE  
SLIDING DOOR  
AND WALKED  
OUT ONTO THE  
BALCONY.



HE HAD TO HURRY  
BACK TO THE  
UNDERWORLD  
BEFORE OLIVIA  
WAS PROCESSED  
BACK THROUGH.



JIM CLIMBED  
UP ONTO THE  
RAILING AND  
JUMPED OFF  
INTO THE NIGHT.



HE CROSSED BACK  
TO THE UNDERWORLD.



# CHAPTER 26

AFTER A LONG WAIT,  
THE GATE OPENED AND  
JIM WAS ALLOWED IN.  
HE WALKED UP THE  
GRAVEL PATH AND  
WAS ADMITTED INTO  
THE MANSION.

HADES WAS FURIOUS. JIM  
TRIED TO EXPLAIN, BUT THE  
GOD OF THE UNDERWORLD  
CUT HIM OFF.

AFTER ALL I  
DID FOR YOU.

ENOUGH OF THIS.  
BOTH OF YOU ARE  
GOING INTO JARS...  
FOR ETERNITY.





JIM DECLINED TO DEFEND HIMSELF. INSTEAD, KNOWING HADES, HE PROPOSED A WAGER.



SET LUNA DOWN BETWEEN ME AND PERSEPHONE, AND LET THE CAT DECIDE.



IF SHE COMES TO ME... OLIVIA AND I ARE FREE TO GO BACK. IF NOT...



HADES STOOD SILENTLY FOR A MOMENT, THEN BEGAN TO SMILE.

OKAY.



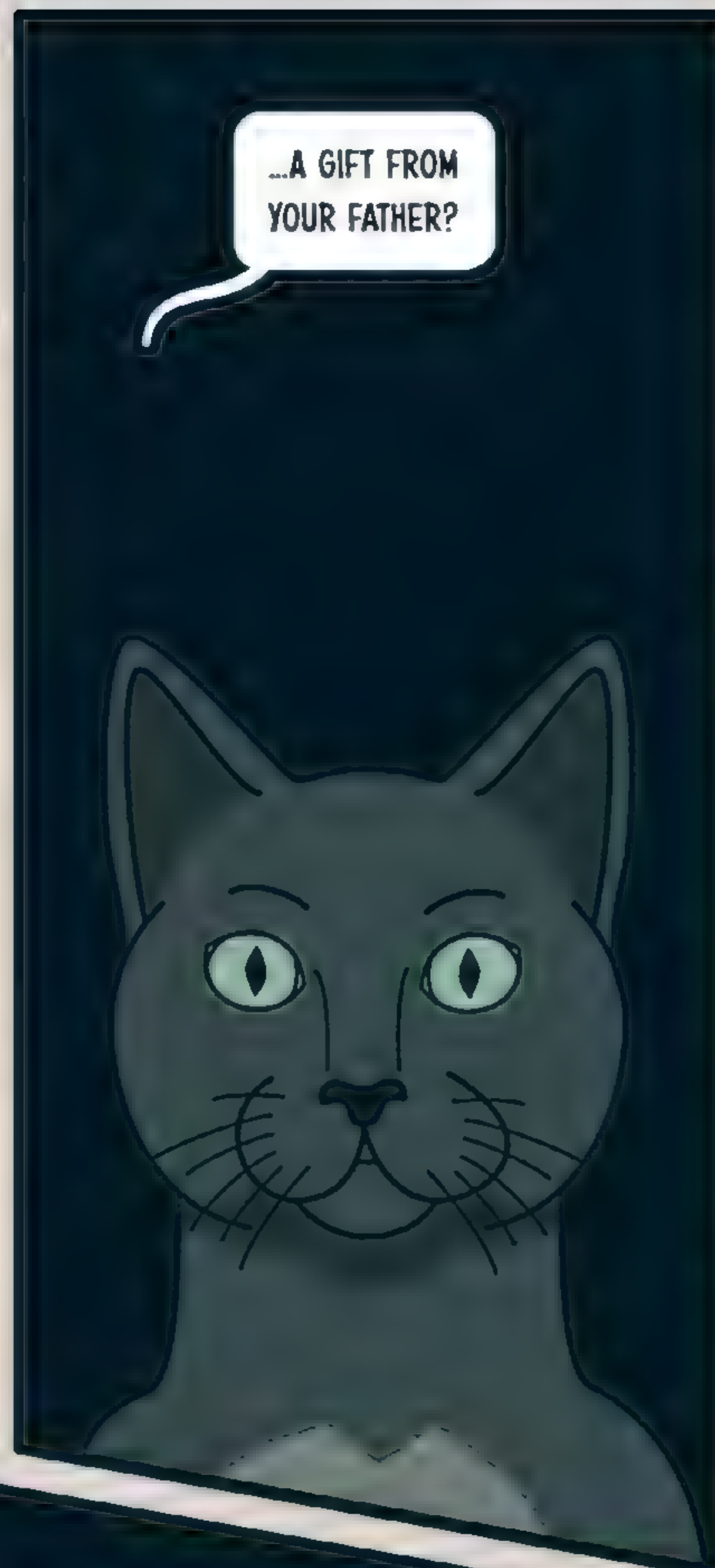




LUNA WAS  
PLACED ON THE  
FLOOR HALFWAY  
BETWEEN  
JIM AND  
PERSEPHONE.



HADES NOTED  
THE RING ON  
JIM'S FINGER.



...A GIFT FROM  
YOUR FATHER?



THE  
TENSION  
ROSE...



AFTER SEVERAL  
MINUTES, LUNA  
TURNED AND  
JUMPED INTO  
PERSEPHONE'S  
ARMS.

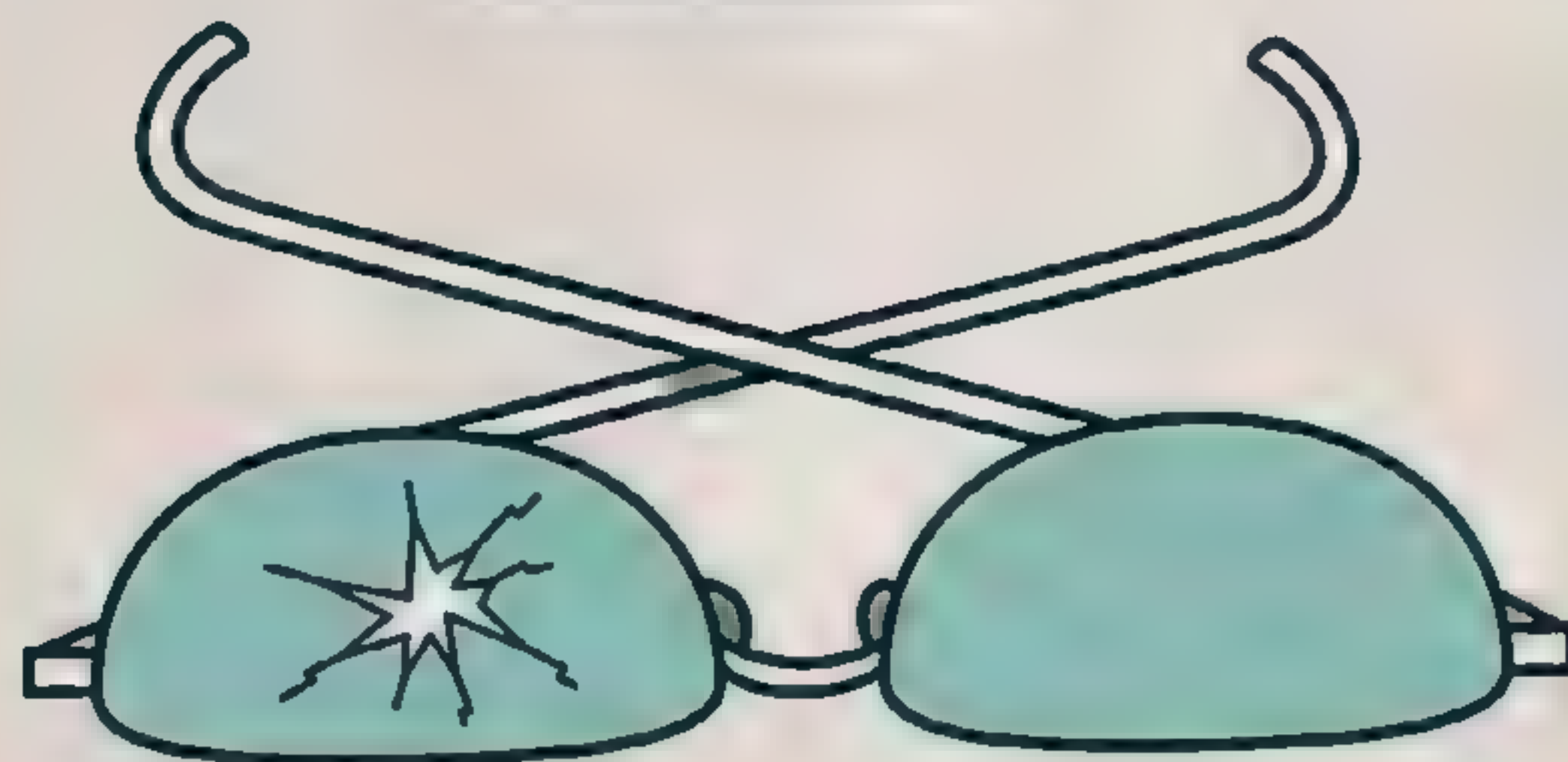


SHE SWEEPED HER UP  
AND WALKED OUT  
OF THE ROOM,  
COMPLAINING  
ABOUT THE COLD.





JIM AND OLIVIA  
WERE HUSTLED  
AWAY BY  
THE GUARDS.



IT LOOKED LIKE JIM'S  
BUT MUCH BIGGER.



HADES SMILED AND  
SLOWLY TWISTED  
THE RING ON  
HIS FINGER.







DOWN THE HALL CAME THE  
SOUND OF SHOES CLACKING  
ACROSS A STONE FLOOR.  
FROM FAR AWAY,  
A CAT MEOWED.



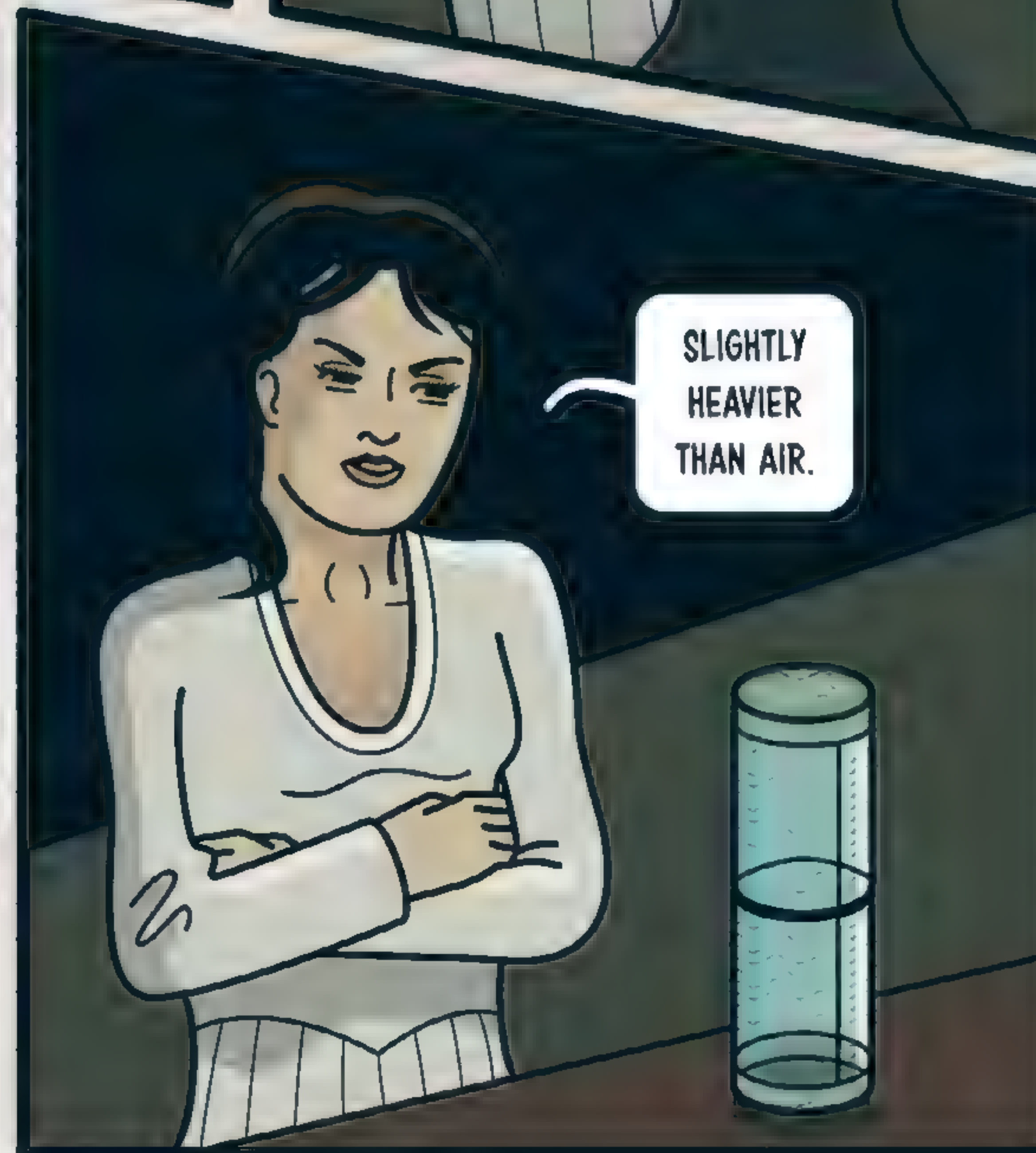
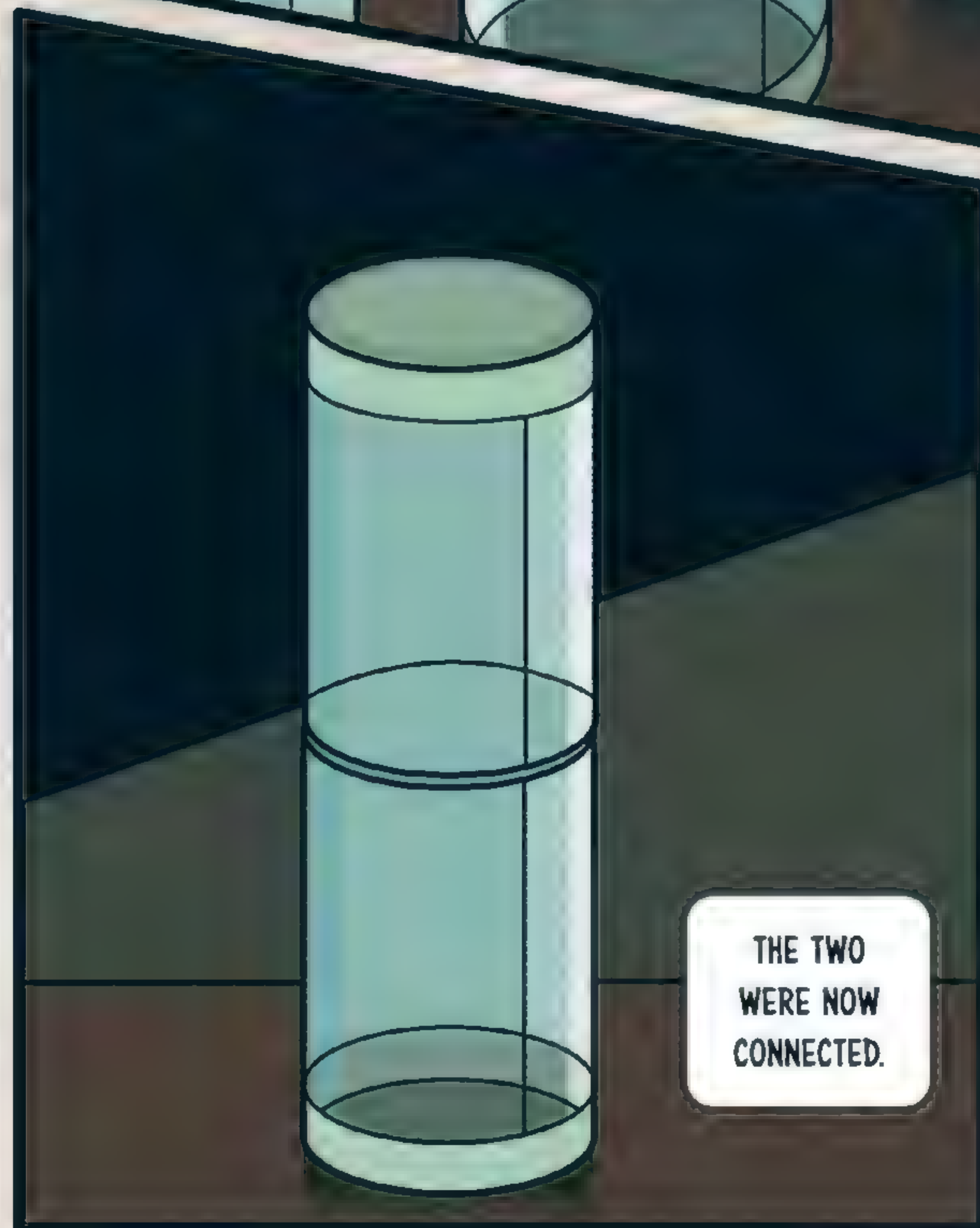
M E E E O O O W W W

THE HALLWAY WAS  
LINED WITH GLASS  
JARS, WHICH STOOD  
IN PERFECT SYMMETRY,  
GLINTING IN THE  
LOW LIGHT.



A FLASHLIGHT SWITCHED ON.  
IT WAS PERSEPHONE,  
SLOWLY MAKING HER WAY  
DOWN THE ROWS.









AFTER A FEW MINUTES,  
PERSEPHONE REMOVED  
THE TOP JAR...



...AND QUICKLY  
SCREWED BOTH  
LIDS BACK ON.



HOLDING THE BOTTOM JAR  
UP, SHE LOOKED IN AT THE  
SLIGHTLY COLORED GAS  
WAFING AROUND.



JOIN HANDS,  
YOU LOVEBIRDS.

PERSEPHONE  
BEGAN TO HUM  
A TUNE. SHE  
PICKED UP LUNA  
AS SHE SANG  
THE WORDS.



"AND SO IT SEEMS THAT WE HAVE MET BEFORE,  
AND LAUGHED BEFORE. AND LOVED BEFORE.  
♪ BUT WHO KNOWS WHERE OR WHEN?" ♪

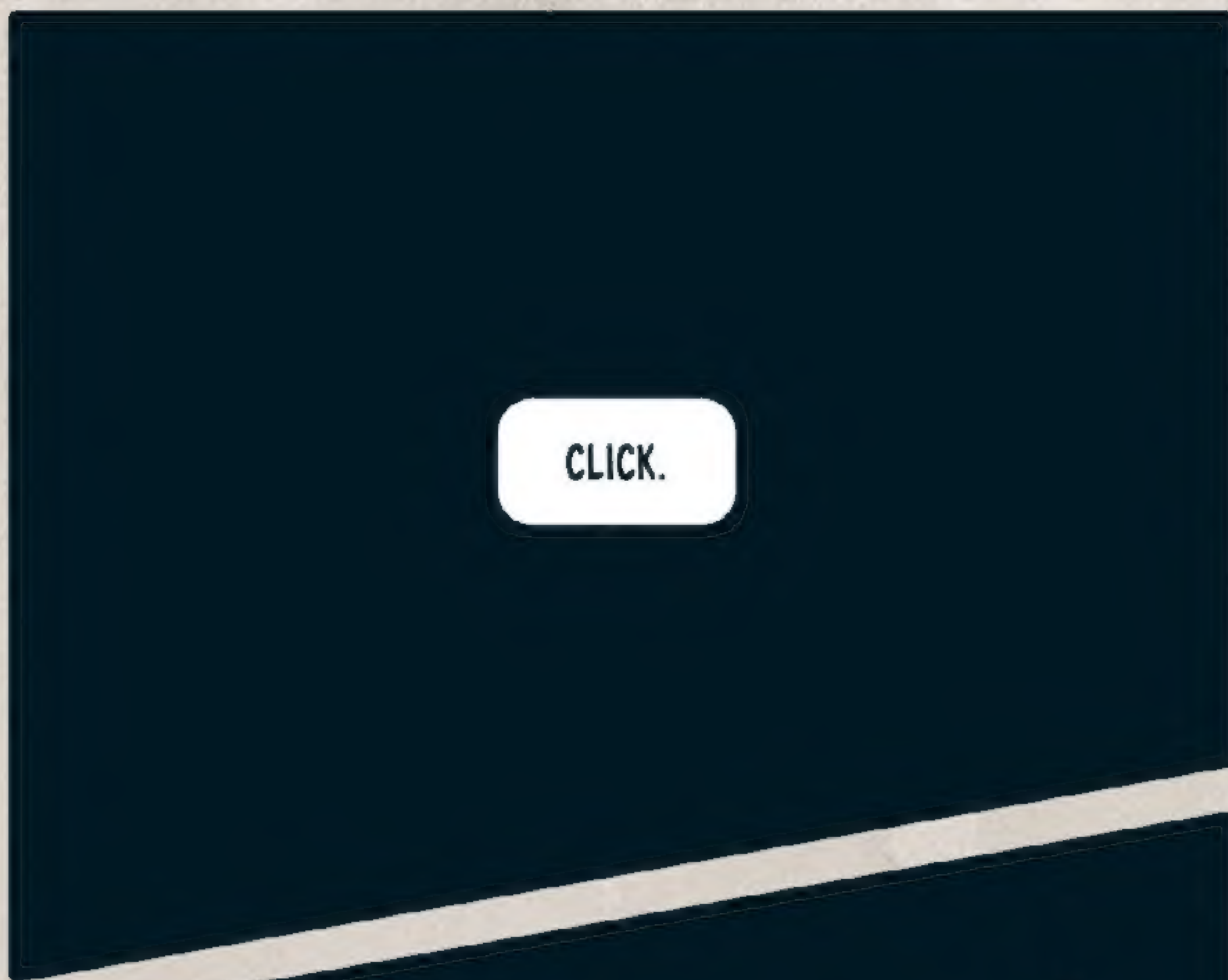




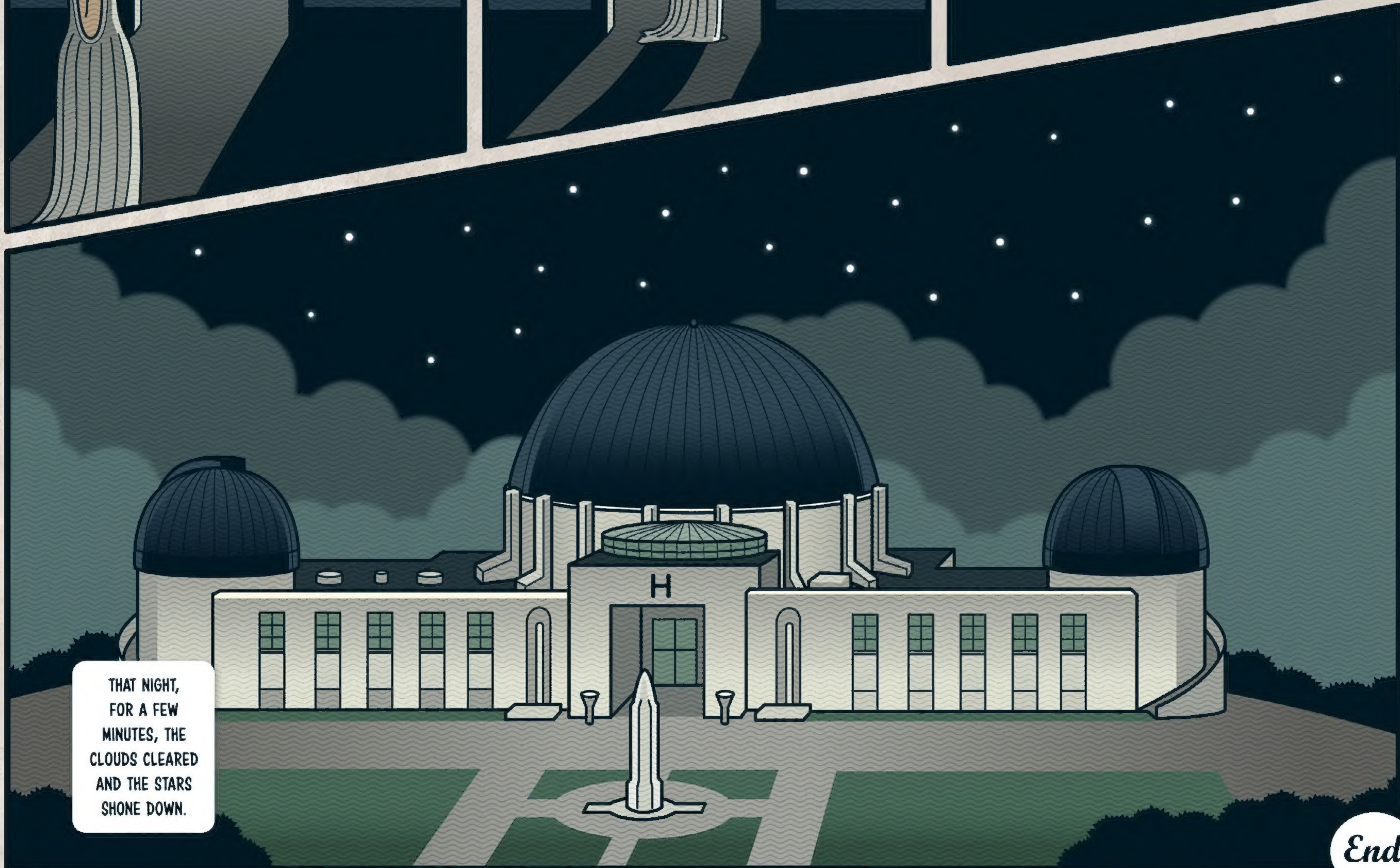
AND WITH THAT,  
THE QUEEN  
OF THE  
UNDERWORLD  
TURNED  
TO LEAVE.



WHEN SHE  
REACHED THE  
DOORWAY,  
SHE SWITCHED  
OFF THE  
LIGHTS.



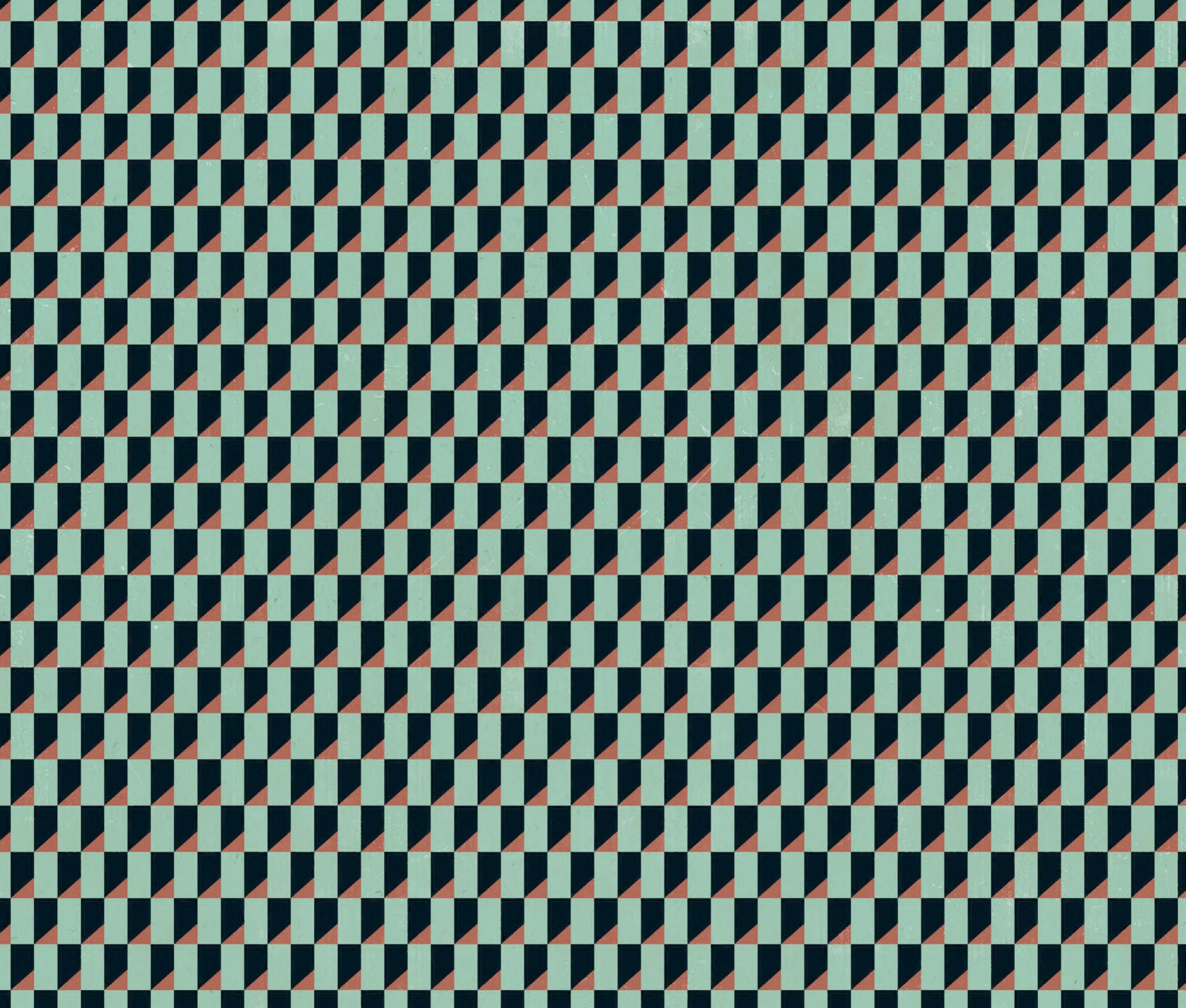
CLICK.



THAT NIGHT,  
FOR A FEW  
MINUTES, THE  
CLOUDS CLEARED  
AND THE STARS  
SHONE DOWN.

End







# A SURREAL SMUGGLING OPERATION ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES OF LIFE AND DEATH

"To read comics by Peter and Maria Hoey is to immerse oneself  
in the limitless possibility of sequential art as a visual language."

– Andy Oliver, *Broken Frontier*

